FARM WIVES' WORK:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DAIRY AND POTATO FARMING IN NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA

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For Michael who doggedly insisted I pursue my doctorate studies.

DECLARATION

I have composed this thesis myself on the basis of my own work.

Susan Machum
1 December 1998

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AASA	Atlantic Association of Sociology and Anthropology
ADLIC	
AI	Artifical Insemination
ARS	Agricultural Resource Study
Cdn	Canadian
DHAS	Dairy Herd Analysis Service
GATT	General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs
MMB	Milk Marketing Board
NAFTA	North America Free Trade Agreement
NBFWN	New Brunswick Farm Women's Network
OFWN	Ontario Farm Women's Network

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Catrina Tapley and David Jones provided me and my extended family with a week's accommodation in Ottawa while I worked at Statistics Canada and my family vacationed for which I am very grateful. Robin Alsop and Byron Sheldrick also provided me with a quiet week to thoroughly read through and sort out my interview data. That week of work gave me the base I needed to push onwards. It was also the first time in my life I got a sense of what it must be like to be a 'husband' coming home from work — all my meals were prepared for me, there was somebody waiting at home to listen to me when I came in from the 'office', people took care of my space and my leisure — spending the week with them really helped me appreciate the literature I had been reading! The days I spent with Darrell and Floranne McLaughlin during the potato harvest gave me great insight into the work rhythms of potato farming. Coming from the city I found the early morning start hard to deal with and I reflected on how my schedule would not easily accommodate farm work but nor would the farm work schedule easily transpose itself onto my work schedule. I thank them for giving me this experience so that I could appreciate the importance of farm work schedules in farm women's work.

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ABSTRACT

Farm Wives' Work:
A Comparative Study of Dairy and Potato Farming
in New Brunswick, Canada

Many researchers have documented, classified and ventured to explain women's multifarious contributions to family farming. But few have contemplated the obverse question: how family farming contributes to and shapes farm women's work. It is this second question which concerns this research project. Specifically, this thesis considers how farm wives' work is shaped and influenced by: 'family' farming, a farm's commodity production, and the changing farm community.

Family farms by definition combine two strong social institutions — the realm of the family and the world of work. This has meant farm wives are frequently called upon to participate in and contribute to their farmer husbands' jobs. Yet the job they are called upon to do can vary greatly from one 'family' farm to the next depending upon what the farm sets out to produce and how it organises itself to get the job done. This thesis argues a farm's commodity production, its *raison d'être*, is a critical, but neglected, factor in understanding and explaining the diversity in farm wives' work.

Using a comparative case study research design, the thesis examines the similarities and differences in farm wives' work on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. New Brunswick, Canada was selected as the research site because of the opportunity it provided to study two highly contrasting but comparable farm industries. Potato production is an intense and seasonal process, involving the planting, tending and harvesting of a field crop. Dairy farms are all-year operations involving animal husbandry and milk collection on a daily schedule. Potatoes are sold in 'open', uncertain markets; milk is sold in a 'closed' market protected and regulated by the provincial Milk Marketing Board. The differing labour demands, marketing arrangements and other conditions surrounding the production and sale of milk and potatoes made them ideal industries to study the effects of a farm's commodity on farm wives' work. The family, farm and work histories of fourteen farm wives on potato farms and sixteen farm wives on dairy farms were gathered, between November 1995 and September 1996, using an in-depth, open-ended interview format.

What the farm sets out to produce effectively establishes its labour requirements, its work rhythms, as well as the marketing and pricing arrangements farm families will face. As a result, the farm's commodity provides the key for understanding the various ways farm wives become 'incorporated' into their husband's work. Dairy farmers are not engaged in the same work as potato farmers even though both are called farmers and there are similarities in their work. It is not enough to study farm wives' work without ascertaining the particularities of being a dairy farmer's wife or a potato farmer's wife. At the same time both sectors must contend with agricultural restructuring, the cost-price squeeze and the economic uncertainties facing their rural communities. In examining the implications of this case study for future research on farm women's work, the thesis adds we must re-evaluate the spatial locations of work — household, on farm, off farm and community — and analytic dichotomies of work — productive and reproductive, paid and unpaid, direct and indirect — in order to better appreciate how farm wives contribute to family farming and how family farming contributes to farm wives' work.

Part One:

Studying Farm Wives' Work

My interest in farm women's work and women's role in agriculture did not begin because I grew up in a rural community, even though I did. But I was like most young people, I wanted to get as far away from my parents and my community as I possibly could. Agriculture was boring and none of my peers were going to operate their parent's farms. Farm families had encouraged their children to become professionals in order to escape the cycle of endless hours of work, stress, increasing debt, low pay and poverty which characterised New Brunswick agriculture (New Brunswick, 1977). My interest in the topic began in 1984 when I participated in a Canada World Youth[1] agricultural exchange program.

Before travelling to Bolivia where I lived and worked on a peach farm, I lived and worked for three months on a cattle farm in Nova Scotia[2]. Working on this cattle farm raised many questions for me in terms of what was and wasn't happening in Canadian agriculture. But the point where my research interest in farm women's work began is best traced to the group meeting where my male counterpart, Concépcion, announced that I hadn't been doing any work. According to him, I didn't do anything all day but sit around the house while he was out working in the fields. I took great offence.

Everyday I was helping my host mother do the laundry, clean the bathroom, cook all the meals, weed the vegetable garden, harvest whatever vegetables were ready, pick wild berries and either freeze them or bake pies for supper. I mowed the lawn once a week and regularly helped entertain the family's four year old daughter. What did he mean I wasn't doing anything? — I was doing exactly the same things my host mother, i.e. a farmer's wife, was doing! While I "did nothing", he sat on the back of

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[1] Canada World Youth is an educational exchange programme primarily funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. Canadian youth between the ages of 17 to 21 are paired with youth from Third World countries. This "counterpart" pair voluntarily work three months in a Canadian community and three months in a developing country focusing on agriculture, social services or community development projects. Generally counterpart pairs are formed on a same gender basis — but the Canadian team had an equal number of male and female participants while the Bolivian team had more male participants than females. I was, therefore, paired with a Bolivian male.

[2] The province adjacent to New Brunswick to the South and East. It is one of the Maritime provinces along with Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

the tractor our host father, the farmer, drove since he had no driver's licence nor driving experience. In my mind, he was the one not working. As the summer progressed, I continued to do household and family related activities while he did "farm work". However, the tensions between us did subside somewhat when I started doing more farm work in addition to household tasks. During the summer, we both helped get the square bales of hay from the fields into the barn, repaired fences and chased loose cattle.

But the sting of his remarks never left me. Why, when I was doing "housework" all day, was I doing nothing? If I was doing nothing, why did I feel so tired at the end of the day? Why are men, who spend most of their day sitting on a tractor, seen to be working? Why was I not seen to be working when I was fetching laundry, sorting it, washing it, hanging it on the line, taking it off the line, ironing it, folding it and carrying it upstairs to put it away? What made my activities not work and his activities work?

These questions have plagued feminist scholars since the 1960s. But the study of farm women's work only began to proliferate in the 1980s when researchers began to examine women's roles in contemporary agriculture, how those roles play themselves out in everyday work activities, and the social conditions which affect women's involvement in agricultural production (Leckie, 1993). Specifically studies asked: 'Who are farm women?' (Pearson, 1979), 'What role do they have in agricultural production?' (Gasson, 1980; Ceboratev *et. al.*, 1985), and 'How do changes in farming affect farm women's roles and work activities?' (Reimer, 1986; Leckie, 1993).

Numerous studies became interested in what exactly do farm women do and how do we understand their labour. This work has produced detailed accounts of farm women's work activities. Early studies relied on time budget studies to document the day to day activities of farm women. Eventually three general work spheres were identified — farm women worked in the household, on the farm and off the farm. Some studies have extended this analysis to include community work and political activism as a fourth sphere (Shortall, 1994).

Efforts to make sense of farm women's varied roles and work experiences have tended to revolve around three themes. One explanation posits the patriarchal world in which we live gives men control over economic resources and women's labour. This analysis argues agriculture is male dominated. Women's labour is mobilised and

appropriated by men for their benefit which leads to a variety of exploitative work situations for farm women. A second position is farm women's "socio-personal" characteristics like age, education, and different stages of the family life cycle account for the variations in their work activities and roles. Others argue it is the ongoing changes in the agricultural industry which are responsible for the variation in farm women's work roles and activities.

Surprisingly, even though one of the most important distinctions amongst farm enterprises is the commodity they produce, almost all research on farm women has overlooked this factor when accounting for and making sense of their varied work activities. Having grown up in a rural community where dairy, cattle, pigs, sheep and extensive vegetable fields overlapped, it seems obvious to me that what a farm sets out to produce defines the work which needs to be done — as much as the size of the farm, its level of mechanisation and whether or not family or wage labour gets the job done. Not to gainsay the importance of other explanatory factors, this thesis argues a farm's commodity production creates several demands and pressures for farm wives which in turn affect their work activities.

This part of the thesis is designed to introduce you to the key concepts, scope and parameters of the research project. The first chapter tells you the family, farm and work histories of Barbara and Betty. These are real people and real stories. The two women are both farming in the Upper St. John River Valley which is locally known as the potato belt because New Brunswick's potato production is concentrated in the area. Unlike many potato farms, these two farms also continue to raise and milk dairy cattle — thereby combining the two commodities at the heart of this study. These two women both married farmers and have both been actively involved in their family farm operations which have weathered ups and downs and many changes. Even though they share many characteristics their stories illustrate how diverse family farms can be in the province. Barbara and Betty's stories represent the spectrum of farm operations and work experiences to be found amongst the farm wives in this study.

The second chapter briefly describes the changing social, economic and political features of New Brunswick since it is within this context of a changing rural and farm community that the family farm operations of Barbara, Betty and the other women interviewed in this thesis persevere. The chapter considers the dynamics of social change as well as the changing nature of dairy and potato farming in the province. Dairy and potato farming account for almost half the province's agricultural production. These two commodities have seen the greatest level of mechanisation and

investment in the province. They are ideally suited for observing the changing farm community and how commodity influences the family farm household and farm wives' work.

The final introductory chapter introduces the case study at the heart of this thesis, *Farm Wives' Work: A Comparative Study of Dairy and Potato Farming in New Brunswick, Canada.* It begins with a discussion of farm, wives' and work in order to explore how the dynamics of family farming, a farm's commodity production and the changing farm community affect and influence farm wives' work activities — the key questions of this research project. This chapter addresses what the thesis does and does not study. It concludes by outlining the remaining chapters and general organisation of the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STORY OF TWO FARM WIVES

As I rummaged through my bright yellow 'potential interviewees' file, I found the scrap of paper with Barbara's name and address on it along with others I've added over the years. It reminded me of when I first met Barbara ten years ago at a conference on rural restructuring in New Brunswick. During a coffee break, we talked about my interest in studying women and agriculture and I learned that she and her husband farmed. She was surprised but enthusiastic about my research interests and wrote her name and address on that scrap of paper saying she wouldn't mind being interviewed. But now I couldn't remember what commodities they produced and would she still be interested in being interviewed ten years later? Nervously, I picked up the phone and made my initial phone call. Of course, Barbara didn't remember meeting me ten years earlier. But she was still willing to be interviewed as part of my current research project. She and her husband ran a dairy and potato operation with one of their sons. As I wrote down the directions to her farm replete with landmarks and estimated distances, we agreed I would visit the following week.

I travelled north 100 kilometres along the TransCanada Highway from Fredericton to Woodstock and then wound my way through treed back roads dotted with rural mail boxes in search of Barbara's farm. I finally spotted it on the right — testimony to Barbara's clear and accurate directions. The old farm house was well preserved. New additions had been added and a fence surrounding a swimming pool was barely visible as I drove up the driveway. Garages, potato houses, dairy barns and silos stood together beside and directly behind the house — it was clearly a large operation. What immediately struck me was how neat everything was. Nothing seemed out of place and the farm yard was free of mud even though it was the spring of the year. The buildings all looked modern, up-to-date and well maintained. The vista looked like a spread out of a brochure promoting farm business success complete with a big friendly dog.

I was greeted by the family dog and Barbara's husband Edward who was on his way to a farm meeting. As the sun set, Barbara and I settled into the family living

room with a cup of tea. She sewed quilting squares while I kept track of the tape recorder and took notes as we talked about her life, work and the family farm.

For Barbara farm life started when she married Edward in 1970. Her grandparents had all farmed but her father, like many people in his generation, opted not to farm. Instead he had his own retail business and raised his family in town. Conversely, Edward's father, George, had opted to farm his family's homestead. Edward and his brothers represented the third generation to farm on this land. Barbara and Edward's marriage in 1970 marked many changes on her new husband's family farm.

Her father-in-law, George and his five sons had worked and expanded the family farm from a small mixed holding to a specialised potato operation. Her husband's three older brothers left the family operation shortly before Barbara and Edward married. The farm had built up enough resources for the three older brothers to buy and operate their own farms — and they had teenage children who were interested and able to work with them on their newly established nuclear family farm operations. Edward and his brother John were younger and they did not have as many financial resources or children old enough to work a farm so they continued to pool their labour and resources with their father.

Edward was the youngest son and the only one without his own house and farm. So when Barbara and Edward married, George sold the family homestead and farm to them since he was a widower and the house was much bigger than he needed. He moved nearby into a smaller house and only slowly extracted himself from farming.

This father and sons operation was in the business of growing and selling potatoes. Each partner had their own land base but they shared equipment and exchanged labour. Edward and John had a formal partnership agreement for sharing equipment, resources and family labour — but they kept separate finances and maintained individual ownership of their farm properties. This agreement enabled Barbara's name to be on the property deed since she and Edward bought the farm together. Between Edward and Barbara's, John's and George's farms, they had approximately 500 acres — about 300 acres were planted in potatoes, hay fields and grains which permitted a three year crop rotation. The remainder was woodlot.

It was shortly after they were married that Edward made the decision to diversify into dairy farming. During the first year of their marriage, he built a dairy barn, bought cows and milk quota and started shipping milk the following year. They started with 15 cows in a tie up barn and milked with a pipeline system. This means that each cow

was tied up in its own stall and fed individually. The cows were computer fed from the beginning — each cow had its own feeder which measured and monitored how much it ate. Behind each row of stalls a gutter and conveyor belt barn cleaning system collected the cow's waste and delivered it to a manure pile — the manure was eventually spread over fields as fertiliser. Milk pipes, which resemble water pipes, ran above the tie stalls and had valves at regular intervals for the milking apparatus which was attached to the cow's teats and hooked to the pipeline valves. The milk travelled from the cow into the pipe line and was carried to a stainless steel cylinder holding tank. Every two days the milk would be collected by a milk truck. Since the dairy operation remained their responsibility and was not shared with his father and brother, Edward and an elderly herdsman looked after the cows during the first eight years. Barbara would always help out with summer haying by driving hay loads, picking up work crews and making meals — or she might be sent off to pick up parts for broken machinery.

Edward and John planned and grew the potato crop together. They would prepare the land, cut the seed by hand and plant in the spring. Barbara initially helped cut seed by hand but she wasn't "very good at it". Besides it wasn't long before they invested in a mechanical seed potato cutter which meant hand cutting was no longer necessary. Each year they grew one hundred acres of potatoes — Snowdon, Sheopady and Russet Burbank varieties — mostly for the processing market. They already had a conventional harvester by 1970 to harvest the crop in the fall. During the first two harvests after their marriage, Barbara worked during the day as a school teacher and came home at night and worked on the harvester. This meant working every night during late September, October and even into early November if the weather hadn't been good and the crop still wasn't harvested. Two potato houses held the potato crop until the processing plants called for them to be delivered.

By 1972, Barbara had one child and was expecting a second one so she stopped teaching. Five years later she had her third child. During these first ten years of their marriage, the brothers were working together so she was much less involved in the farm. She was busy with child care, initial house renovations (which she helped pay for with her teaching income), sewing, gardening and food preservation. She made pickles and preserves but she didn't freeze many vegetables — they would keep some things like potatoes, carrots and onions over the winter. She got fresh eggs from her father-in-law and she baked sweets and bread regularly. They got fresh milk from the cows daily and she made ice cream on special occasions using the milk separator to

separate the cream from the milk. She earned money by baby-sitting the neighbour's children in her own home and by taking in sewing.

Then in 1978, they built a new dairy barn and expanded the size of their herd and milk quota. The new free stall barn had a milking parlour which milked eight cows at a time and an automatic barn cleaner. Free stall barns involve an open concept, instead of being tied into individual stalls cows 'roam' around the main section of the barn. Off the main section, in a separate room, is the milk parlour. Cows are herded to that end of the barn for milking and they are brought into the milk parlour according to the number of milkers installed. Whoever is milking the cows stands in a pit, a metal fence surrounds the pit and cows flank the fence, feeders are in front of the cows so they can eat during milking. Standing in the pit, the person milking can reach the cows teats at about their own waist level, cleaning them and then attaching the milkers to them. The milk is carried through piping into the milk holding tank housed in a separate room. With Barbara and Edward's new barn, while the cows were being milked, with the push of a button, the automatic cleaner would clean the barn — two large scrapers would start at one end of the barn and push the waste from one end to the other. At the disposal end, the waste is funnelled into a manure lagoon. To this day, each fall and spring the manure is spread on the fields as fertiliser. In the new barn, the cows continue to be fed by a computerised feeding system. But now each cow has a 'necklace' so it can approach any feeding bowl and the computer can identify the cow, how much they have eaten of their daily allotment and determine how much feed to authorise to come down the shute in front of the waiting cow. As well, each cow's performance was and continues to be monitored and evaluated every month through a provincial government program called DHAS. The farm pays for this service which informs them how their herd ranks when compared to other dairy farms in the province. This program helps them assess how well they are managing the dairy operation. They do not breed the cows themselves, every month a local AI representative visits the farm to artificially inseminate the cows which are to be bred that month. Over the years they have built up a pure-bred Holstein herd.

Barbara started milking regularly when this new barn and milk parlour were built. The herdsman was an older man and he was finding it harder to do. With the milk parlour, there was no longer any fear of being kicked by the cows as you milked so Barbara and Edward did the milking together every night after supper. They took the three children to the barn with them and when they were pre-school the children stayed with her in the milk parlour. Once the children were in school she milked in the mornings as well as the evenings and took a job as a part-time librarian at the local

high school. She earned money from this job as well as for milking. She continued to do this until the children were old enough to take on milking with their father. She still went to the barn every morning and early evening for an hour "to get the kids going more than anything". At this point she set up her own retail business which was not farm related in the nearby town. She kept flexible working hours in her business so that she would still be available to go to the barn. She mainly spent her earnings on household renovations, the children and personal things for herself. During these years the dairy herd remained their family's responsibility and the potato operation continued to be shared with John's family. Edward kept track of the farm finances and books for their dairy operation while John's wife looked after the financial records of the shared potato farm.

By now Edward and John's father had slowly extracted himself from the farm leaving his two sons farming potatoes together. The two brothers continued with this arrangement during the first 18 years of Edward and Barbara's marriage. But they eventually split their intra-generational family farm operation in the late eighties when Edward's nephews were getting married and wanted to take up farming with their father. Since they had maintained separate finances and one family had bought one piece of equipment, the other family another and some items had been bought and built jointly, dividing up the assets was very difficult. Barbara felt this was a very stressful and somewhat sad time — tensions ran high, not everyone agreed on how to make a fair and equitable split and it marked the end of the two families' partnership both economically and socially. Since the 'business' split resulted in many emotional outbursts the two families which once used to share 'a business' and interact socially now only meet when large family gatherings dictate it. The break-up also marked the beginning of many more substantial changes for Barbara and Edward's farm.

It was about eight years ago that Edward and Barbara began farming on their own. And Barbara told me they are doing more today than what Edward, his three brothers and father were doing twenty-five years ago. Over the years they have more than quadrupled the number of cows they milk. They started with fifteen cows and now they are milking 65 cows. Since the late 1980s, they have expanded the farm from 500 acres to 1500 acres. They now have 1200 acres in crop rotations and 300 acres in woodlot. Last year they grew 410 acres of potatoes compared to the 100 acres they were growing just before Edward and John stopped farming together. They've built three new state of the art potato houses and improved the two existing potato houses which has given them five times the storage capacity they had before. The farm is

growing and continues to grow. Just last year they spent $60,000 purchasing milk quota in order to ship all the milk their sixty-five dairy cows produce twice a day.

They are now growing seed potatoes as well as processing potatoes. During the fall harvest, they use an air vac harvester and a four row windrow (which rakes four rows of potatoes into one row). The windrower reduces the number of trips the harvester has to make up and down the fields to the point that it is equivalent to having an extra harvester in the field. As a result, the 410 acre crop can often be harvested in just three weeks. They usually do an early harvest in August which they receive a premium price for from the processing companies. Most of the crop, however, is sold and delivered during the fall and winter months to either McCains who turns them into 'chips' or to a 'crisps' processing plant. Having good storage facilities is important because the longer Barbara and Edward can keep their potato crop in storage, the higher the price they will receive from the processors as potatoes will deteriorate over time. But basically they have to develiver their crop whenever the processors ask for it. This means the dairy operation is very important for maintaining and sustaining the farm's cash flow because payment from the New Brunswick Milk Marketing board is directly deposited into their account on the first and fifteenth of each month. According to Barbara it is the dairy operation which helps them "manage the debts since the cows supply a steady source of income".

The dairy cows are milked twice a day. A certain number of cows are artificially inseminated each month so that the milking herd is maintained in size when cows are 'dried up' for giving birth. This means birthing is year round and Edward is 'on call' year round for calving. It is important to keep cows milking consistently on a day to day basis so quota is maintained and the farm doesn't over-produce because if they do send too much milk to the plants they are fined by the Milk Marketing Board for producing beyond their stated quota. In the past years they have been fined for over production which is why they've ended up purchasing more quota. Barbara told me "you might as well dump it down the drain" as send it to the milk processing plants because your fined rather than paid for producing it. Usually when the cows are 'over-producing', Barbara makes butter and ice cream and they feed the extra milk to the calves. They no longer drink their own milk instead they buy low fat milk from the supermarket for dietary reasons. They grow some of their own grains and they mix their own feed for the cows. They feed the cows silage and they have two large silos adjacent to the dairy barns and they make large round bales of hay rather than the small, square bales of bygone days. When they were making square hay bales, they needed a large crew and Barbara "used to drive the trucks from the field to the barns or

go and pick up work crews and drive them to the appropriate work site." Haying crews used to get fed an evening meal if they were going to work after supper and Barbara would be the one cooking the meal for the extra five to ten people.

Barbara no longer milks the cows on a daily basis nor does she go to the barn to help motivate the children. Their son works with them on the farm while their two daughters are pursuing other interests. The farm has come to depend quite heavily on wage labour. They have two herdsmen and her husband and son tending to and milking the cows. One herdsman works through the week while the other three are responsible for weekend milkings. Therefore, Barbara's husband now only has to milk every third weekend. During the summer (from the early spring to the late fall), they have four full-time employees working on the potato crop, grains, hay and silage. They hire an additional six more people to work during the harvest, plus they have a six member night crew for harvesting which is considered part-time. Barbara still might get called on to help with the harvest if crew members do not show up for work. Frequently she is the person looking for replacement workers. During the three to four weeks of harvests she takes her husband's and son's meals to the field so they don't have to take the time to travel in for meals. Some years, Barbara has worked as part of the night crew but usually she only works on the potato harvester "in August when we're harvesting the early crop because then we don't have to hire a full crew". The night harvest crew works under big flood lights and equipment is moved at the end of each night if they will be harvesting at a new field in the morning.

Barbara has always been paid for the work she's done on the farm. Both she and her husband take salaries from the farm as she works in the farm office, which is a room off the kitchen, every morning from 9 until 12. During this time she is answering the phone, keeping the farm accounts, doing record keeping and keeping up-to-date on farm programs and policies. The office is computerised and they have direct access to their bank account through the internet so she can reconcile the books on a daily basis. All the farm accounts are done using a computer program — "everything is computerised, even cheque writing". They have always kept separate accounts for the family household and the farm enterprise. Since the early 1990s the farm has been incorporated making it a public liability company. Barbara is the secretary/ treasurer of the farm company. Her husband is president of the company and her son vice-president. They incorporated the farm in order to "transfer ownership gradually from them to their son and thought it would be better for tax purposes...our accountant advised us to do it".

As the farm is incorporated, making it a public liability company, all three sign for any operating or expansion loans the farm negotiates with the bank. Farm loans are negotiated and agreed upon together at their home as "the bank person comes here and we all sit together at the kitchen table". But it is clear there is a lot of stress within the family about succession, vision and goals. Barbara told me she often has to mediate between her husband and son who have different views of how the farm should be managed and developed. She often feels like she is "caught in the middle" as she tries to manage the stress and tensions within the family and its alter ego 'farm management team'. They have even resorted to hiring a consulting firm to facilitate family communications and farm business planning sessions since so much friction exists between father and son. Her own feelings towards the 'family' farm are that "perhaps expansion has been too fast, we could have lost everything ... my son is very ambitious, he is getting a salary but he wants to feel like he owns something".

She stopped working off the farm and closed down her retail business shortly after they took over the farm on their own. This was because their farm was expanding rapidly and required some one to do record keeping and accounting on a more full-time basis. When Barbara set up her own business she began to have a housekeeper come in on a weekly basis which she said has also "made it easier to help out on the farm". Compared to her neighbours, Barbara never did much gardening and canning but in the last three years she hasn't "had a vegetable garden at all because the new farm buildings have taken over" her garden plot. She does continue to make pickles, bread and cookies but now "with the kids out of the house I cook less and go grocery shopping when necessary ... every time I go to the bank I stop into the store if I need anything, especially since I am right there". Barbara identified herself as the person who was primarily responsible for the household — cooking, cleaning and laundry. She was also the person who was responsible for child care and homework when the children were young. It was she who transported the children to extra-curricular activities. She has had a moderate amount of elder care "but nothing compared to what other people have to do".

They have completely renovated the house with the help of carpenters doing all the major repairs while they have done the decorating themselves. The house is filled with modern conveniences and comforts. I can see a swimming pool outside the patio doors off the conservatory we're sitting in. Barbara's house is also filled with needle work and tole painting crafts. She also quilts and knits. Most of her craft work is given as gifts. And throughout the interview Barbara has continued to sew quilting squares.

When I ask whether or not they are able to leave the farm and go on holidays, I learn they have travelled regularly, often going on international vacations — interestingly, their vacations have frequently meant going on farm tours in other countries. Barbara tells me they've always "done well with vacations, we always had someone look after the kids". They tend to travel during the winter because there's usually too much farm work to do during the summer months. They have a summer cottage at the lake which they escape to in the evenings and on weekends "during the busy season".

Barbara is quite involved in community groups doing volunteer work for four organisations. However, her husband said she shouldn't do this volunteer work because she is "too busy". She told me, "I try not to do things in the spring, summer and fall when they are busy so I can really only do this volunteer work during the winter months".

Barbara sees her office work as being an important part of the overall farm operation, saying if she stopped doing what she did "they would need to hire someone to replace me, they would have to". In terms of her income from teaching, baby-sitting, library work and retail business, she argues "the little bit of money I made didn't make much of a difference to things financially... the farm and the house have always been on an equal footing ... things are good here in that they are evenly balanced." But she also told me, "the financial situation right now is stressful. Dairy farming is more stable — it has been a more even stress, but marketing and selling potatoes is a different kind of stress altogether."

When I asked what Barbara thought their family farm would be like in ten years she told me she and her husband are planning to move from their house in two years so their son and his wife can be responsible for the dairy and monitor the potato houses during the winter months. Her husband will continue to work with the farm and she will come and work in the office or they will have to hire someone. They've already sold their milk quota to their farm corporation in order to retire without burdening their son with a large debt but they "will transfer shares and ownership gradually." In ten years, they will be retired or close to retirement enjoying 'Freedom 55'. In terms of the changes Barbara has seen: "farming is now business oriented, more professional, it is not a way of life like before. Farming is becoming a business like any other business. Whatever they do on the farm, it is to provide more income".

Quite a different story unfolded when I went to Betty's house. It was another woman I interviewed who told me I "just had to meet Betty — she separates cream and churns her own butter, and two adult children, a son and a daughter, still live with her and her husband and help on the farm. You've just got to meet her". When I phoned Betty and told her I was a student doing research and Peggy suggested I interview her, she agreed for me to come the following week. Getting to Betty's house involved a three hour drive from Fredericton, again travelling north on the TransCanada highway. As I left the TransCanada and steered my way through unfamiliar territory I found myself driving along a number of amazingly flat, perfectly laid out grid roads. This was a part of New Brunswick I had never seen before and until today had no idea existed. Potato field after potato field, as far as the eye could travel. I passed bulk trucks taking potatoes to the processing plant, tractors moving from field to field with ploughs and harrows to till the soil. It was the spring and it had been raining heavily during the past week and it was starting to rain now. As I drove into Betty's yard I could feel the mud pulling my car's tires and I wondered if I would get stuck. At least there will be a tractor to pull me out, I thought a little bit apprehensively. But I made it safely down the track and into the door yard. Mud, puddles, rain and the family dog were between me and the house so I made a dash for the veranda trying to keep my feet from sinking too deeply into the mud underfoot.

Betty was a bit nervous as we settled at the kitchen table to talk. Her adult daughter sat on a couch nearby but as the interview progressed Betty relaxed and her daughter joined in at times. At 56, Betty, was eight years older than Barbara, and was clearly not going to be enjoying an early retirement.

Betty grew up on a small mixed farm in the area, as did her husband Russell. It was before they got married, in the summer of 1960, that they decided they would make farming their occupation. Her husband bought the farm six months before they got married as a result Betty's name is not on the property deed though she thinks it might be on the fifty acre piece they added to the farm in the late 1970s. Buying the farm in the late winter enabled them to plant their first crop in the spring, marry in the summer and harvest the crop together in the fall.

Russell was the eldest of eleven children and had been farming with his parents. Betty was the eldest of eight children and she was used to farm work. They were the only children in each of their families who "went into farming". Their new farm had 140 acres and they planted twenty acres in table potatoes that first spring. They shared equipment with Russell's father because he was "just up the road". They had a car and

Russell's father gave them an old tractor to get started. Just after they were married, they also bought four pigs and four cows ready to calve in the following year. They also had hens to supply them with their own eggs.

In the fall of that year, Betty helped her mother-in-law and sister-in-law cook for the harvesting crew which was harvesting the crop on both farms. This meant cooking meals for twelve to fifteen people without the modern conveniences of today. They cooked on wood stoves, carried water and heated it in heavy pots on top of the stove for washing up afterwards. When she wasn't cooking, she was picking potatoes — this entailed filling potato baskets with potatoes, then carrying the basket to the barrel you were filling. When the barrel was filled you tagged it with one of your 'tickets'. The evenings were spent counting the 'tickets' since pickers were paid by the barrel. As the potatoes were dumped from the barrels into the potato house for storage the tickets were collected. The number of tickets had to match the number of barrels put into storage. The information had to be recorded and it was important to be accurate as pickers, too, would be counting the number of barrels they picked over the course of the day. Pickers were paid at the end of the season and it was Betty who kept track of who was owed what and who wrote out pay cheques.

By 1964, Betty had three young children and she started driving trucks to and from the fields. Full barrels were taken to the potato house and empty ones returned to the field to be filled. She had a helper looking after the children in the house but this truck driving also enabled her to take the children with her at times. This was not possible when she was driving the potato digger — the machine that moves along the rows raising the potatoes to the surface of the soil making them easily 'picked' up from the field and dropped into the basket. Betty said this move also helped her to encourage the school aged children who would be picking the crop to keep going. She recalled how this was a real challenge. Schools in the region had begun to implement the 'potato break' which meant children went back to school in August and had three weeks off during the peak harvesting period. Hiring students as pickers meant they were bringing their own lunches and cooking meals for the harvesting crew was no longer necessary. While Betty worked in the fields, her husband worked at the potato house, dumping the barrels and collecting the tickets.

In 1968, they increased the potato acreage to forty acres. Their family was now complete. They had five young children, three daughters and two sons, who were still too young to participate in the potato harvest. They continued to hand pick until 1974 when they bought a one row harvester. Betty "was glad when her husband bought the

harvester" since this reduced the harvesting crew eliminating the need "to encourage school children to pick". In fact they were so happy with the shift they "burnt the tickets and the barrels" when the harvester came along. Three years after buying the harvester, they increased their acreage to fifty acres and bought a two row harvester. Ten years later they stopped growing table potatoes and started growing seed potatoes. They used to grow Superiors and Kennebecs for the table potato market and now they grow Kennebecs for seed potatoes. Seed potatoes are a more labour intensive crop but more money is to be made from their sale. Today they grow fifty-five acres of seed potatoes and they still use the two row harvester, twenty years after purchasing it.

Betty continues to drive the trucks during the harvest. But they are able to harvest the crop with only a small work crew on the harvester. As two of their now adult children, a daughter and son, continue to live and work on the farm, it is family members who are driving all the heavy equipment. They have perfected their system so that the harvest can be done in one week whereas twenty years ago it took two to three weeks.

During the first five years of their marriage the seed would be cut by hand in the spring by both Betty and Russell. Then they switched to a machine and Betty became the person responsible for cutting the seed. It took one and a half hours to cut a fifty pound barrel of potatoes into seed. They would take the barrels to the field by truck and then plant them a barrel at a time. Now the seed is brought to the field in bulk trucks and unloaded straight into the planter. For years Betty "would ride on the back of the planter making sure the seed was dropping into rows as her husband drove the planter". Her mother baby-sat the children "because we didn't have money for help on the farm".

Spring was also the time for rock picking and Betty would drive tractors, harrow and plough the fields. She told me, "I was helping, especially if we were hurrying because of the weather or it had been a cold, late spring and we had had to wait. One year it was June 3rd before the first things were planted". Once the potatoes were planted it was time to start the haying. Betty helped out with summer haying by driving hay loads from the fields, picking up work crews and making meals if they were going to work into the evenings.

On their farm they continue to make square bales of hay rather than round bales or silage. Each year they make between 5,000 and 6,000 square hay bales which must be picked up and collected from the fields. They hire teenagers to help with this work and

the hay is stored in hay lofts in the barn which is hard, hot work in the summer. As we talked about haying, Betty told me "I drive. I don't say anything or see anything, I just stay out of the way. My job is driving, I like to drive". On the farm they have 160 acres in crop rotation: potatoes, grain and hay.

From their four cows which they hand milked they have increased the herd to 22 to 25 cows which they milk only during the summer months using an automated milk pail system which they bought in the mid-1960s. Automated milk pails are strapped onto the cows and attached to their teats. The sealed pail is 'plugged in' and the cows milked. The full milk pail then needs to be detached from the cow and carried to a small tank where the milk goes through a filter into a plastic pail below. It usually takes two to three hours to feed the cows, clean the barn using a front end loader (this work used to be done by hand) and milk the cows. Betty milks the cows while Russell does the feeding and barn cleaning. All the cows are milked before they begin to separate the milk. Once the milk is filtered, it must be carried in pails to the separator and poured into the separator a pail at a time to separate the cream from the milk. After it is separated the cream is stored in cream cans while the skim milk is fed back to the calves. It used to be given to the pigs but they haven't had pigs since the children were small. Then all the equipment has to be washed. In the early days, Betty would wash the cans, separator and milking machine in the kitchen sink using boiling hot water. She has always done the washing up "because it was easier. I couldn't be there in the barn when the children were too young to stay alone". Now, she still does 'the washing up' but in the barn instead of the house.

All the cows are bred at the same time so the calves are born within a two month period rather than throughout the year. Generally the cows give birth in the late winter/ early spring which means calving is concentrated to this time of the year. Russell is the one who goes to the barn for birthing. Female cows are used to replace the herd and male heifers are raised and sold as beef at live auctions. But they also butcher cattle for their own consumption and sometimes they sell beef to customers, especially hamburger. Peak milk production on the farm occurs within the spring and summer months — just after the cows have given birth. They 'dry' the cows up in the fall so they are only milking from May to November of each year. They have always sold cream and when the New Brunswick Milk Marketing Board was established in the early 1970s they were allotted an annual quota of 2,400 kilograms of butterfat. This is the amount they still continue to produce as they have never bought additional quota. Extra cream is hand-churned into butter. In the past Betty would sell butter but now she just makes butter for the family.

Betty also contributed to the family coffers through her own farm related business. A farm related business was a viable 'cash generating' option since Betty never completed high school which would have made it difficult to compete for off-farm employment. For thirty years she had her own poultry business. Every year she would buy twenty week old laying hens, the first year she started with one hundred, then by the third year she had 500 hens. She would go to the hen house five to six times a day to collect the eggs as the hens were free roaming with nests. As the children got older it was their job to help collect eggs. The children were "never paid for doing a job but we gave them little surprises" for their work. Every evening Betty would clean and pack the eggs before "doing the barn jobs" related to the dairy herd. She never candled eggs as she was "able to tell just by looking" whether or not they had been fertilised. Once a week, she took one whole day to deliver her eggs to 135 houses — sometimes she would be leaving eggs for two to three families at one stop. Initially she delivered eggs every Friday but then she switched to Wednesday because she then had "two days to deliver them if Wednesday didn't work". Friday deliveries also made it impossible to participate in out of town events "like weddings, the family just couldn't go". During the potato harvest, she would routinely have to skip a week's delivery because she was needed on the farm. They would often use this time to move the chickens from one hen house to another since the hens wouldn't lay well if they had just been moved. This would enable Betty to thoroughly clean down and disinfect the hen house, while eliminating the need for delivery and free her to work in the potato harvest.

She would sell the old chickens cheaply to those who wanted to buy them and the rest she would kill and can for her family's consumption. Sometimes her children, mother and father would help but this work was mostly taken on by Betty. She would de-skin the chicken eliminating the need for plucking, which made things "a lot easier", then she would clean them out, cut them in pieces, put them in sterilised jars, salt and cover them. Then the jars would be put in a boiler for three hours — this process cooked the chickens while producing "a rich stew broth as the meat made its own juices". Every year she would can around 200 chickens in this way for the family.

Betty would "sell her eggs and go for groceries the next day or the day after". She would collect money as she made her deliveries. The very last year she delivered eggs her husband accompanied her but in all the previous years she went on her own. Every two weeks, Betty would go into town to get her chicken feed and she would

buy feed for the cows at the same time. During these trips she would also pick up farm equipment and parts.

She stopped having hens about six years ago for a number of reasons. One, most of the children were gone so they weren't here to help. Secondly her mother fell ill and she has been the family member primarily responsible for providing care. This has involved driving her mother to a hospital four hours away for treatment at regular intervals. And thirdly, they needed to build a new chicken house. It just didn't seem feasible with "no help" to do the work.

Betty had a large vegetable garden as well. She would buy the seeds and plough the earth, use a planter to make rows and then use a tiller between the rows to keep the weeds down. Planting the vegetable garden took place after the potatoes were planted. Then during the summer, Betty would freeze and can the produce for the family to eat in the winter. She grew, froze and canned "pretty well everything" the family would need during the winter. If she thought there wasn't enough vegetables from her garden she would buy carrots and string beans from neighbouring vegetable stands to augment her own garden. Betty and her children would pick wild berries to make jams and jellies and she would also make pickles. Now they pay to pick berries at U-Picks.

Betty was the person primarily responsible for the household, child care and children's homework. Her daughters helped her with household tasks. She tells me she would have to keep at them to do homework. The children all "had their jobs to do, everybody worked together and everybody had spare time together". The children were not involved in extra-curricular activities because she "did not have time to drive them, it would have been too hard to co-ordinate".

In addition to the other work Betty did, she also sewed the children's clothes when they were small. Now she "does the mending, mostly of work clothes, not too much". She knits sweaters, socks, mittens and slippers which were and still are often given as gifts at Christmas and birthdays. For the first twelve years they were married, Betty canned all the food they ate because they didn't have a freezer. She washed the family's clothes using a wringer washer and hung them on the clothes line outside. In the winter, the clothes would be hung upstairs in the house on lines hung from the ceiling. Then in the early 1970s they had some good 'potato years'. Russell renovated the house and she did the decorating. They were able to buy a freezer, an automatic washer and clothes dryer and a dishwasher during those years. While Betty's home appeared comfortable it did not appear lavish.

The money Betty earned from selling eggs was "used for everything. One winter, we couldn't sell our potatoes and we were glad to have eggs to sell so we had money to fix the car, pay for the electricity, the phone and buy needed farm supplies and grocery staples. I always knew I had my eggs to sell, they were my pay cheque. I knew what to do with it" — pay for oil and gas and give the children lunch money.

They have always had just one account for the farm and the household. It is a joint account and money they made would go into that account "if it ever made it that far". They get paid for their cream during the summer months when they are shipping and they still receive a cheque from the Milk Marketing Board every two weeks which they "prefer to direct deposit". In the winter months they rack the potatoes (i.e. grade them) before sending them to the broker. They wait thirty days before being paid for a shipment. If she needed money for things Betty took it from the account and she's "never felt guilty about household costs" but she has tried "to keep household expenses to a minimum". The federal government's family allowance was hers to use and she "paid bills or bought something if I needed it".

Each spring, she and her husband would go to the bank to negotiate an operating loan which they have both always signed for, now they negotiate a line of credit rather than a loan per se. Betty has been responsible for the farm book-keeping which is easier now that she doesn't have the eggs. She spends two hours at the end of every month sorting out the farm accounts which are not computerised. Their son is paid a salary for working with them but not their daughter and neither she nor her husband have ever taken a salary from the farm.

She and her family have never taken any 'vacations' where they've been away for any length of time. Some times they have been away a few days but there just wasn't the time or money for more than that. Betty told me "I couldn't participate in extra-curricular activities or shop as much as I would like...there was a loss of freedom being on the farm...we were tied to the farm...we couldn't afford a baby-sitter". With her five children grown, she "wants to keep free time for herself, with the cows and everything it's too unpredictable" to be involved in things. However, Betty did participate in the parent teacher association when her children were in school and she was on the church council for ten years but "nobody else has cows and they don't understand when you can't be there, when you have other work to do".

Since she got married, Betty has worked on the farm all year round and she spends three seasons of the year working outdoors in the fields. She told me they

would have to hire more workers if she didn't do what she did. In ten years time Betty thought she and her husband "may be retired, but we won't move into town, as long as my husband can live here, he can do things to help. We know that our son can't buy the farm, it is too much money for somebody starting out". They don't want to change things, "her husband says, why fix what works?" Betty confided to me that the farm is not incorporated and "if it comes to that we'll retire... You can spread out and get bigger but you can't get small again because of the debts — we can make a decent living. We've never had time for profits. ... Why buy out our neighbours? We're happy with the size we are, we don't want to grow larger because we can live on this farm, why risk losing everything?" Here on this farm, "we always have food, we never ran out of what we needed. We had the basics. And if there is no other money coming in we'd still have the milk". Really, she told me, "united we stand, divided we fall".

Barbara and Betty epitomise the range of experiences to be found on family farms in New Brunswick. Their two cases, in many ways, represent polar examples of family farming. They are real stories and not vignettes or composites from my interview data. Their stories illustrate how farm wives contribute to family farming and how family farming contributes to wives' work — the two central concerns of this research project.

CHAPTER TWO

NEW BRUNSWICK'S CHANGING FARM COMMUNITY

Barbara and Betty are both farm wives living and working on family owned and operated farms which are milking cows and growing potatoes. They live within two hundred kilometres of each other in New Brunswick's 'potato belt'. Barbara is eight years younger than Betty and started farming with Edward ten years after Betty and Russell began farming. In age, they are 'contemporaries'. In terms of farming practices, scales of production, social relations of production, and production processes they are worlds apart. Their farms produce the same commodities — milk and potatoes — but how they have organised that production, how they 'get the job done', is vastly different. At the same time, their farms operate within the same political, economic and social world. They market and sell their products in the same places. They both must deal with subsidy reductions, cut backs and the general decline of public services other New Brunswickers confront. They have responded to these broader societal changes differently yet both farm families have managed to stay in farming. They are amongst the survivors — which is no small feat.

Since the Second World War, 23,225 farms have ceased to exist in New Brunswick as older people retired and the next generation pursued different work and career opportunities or they succumbed to insurmountable debts and bankruptcy. Many of these farms have been amalgamated with other farms, abandoned to nature, taken over by urban commuters or transformed into housing developments. The 3,206 remaining farms are under constant pressure to be more efficient and more lucrative in this age of an ever more competitive global economy.

This chapter looks at how rural New Brunswick has changed during the post-war period. The first section of the chapter briefly describes the changing social, economic and political world farm families like Barbara's and Betty's are living in. The second part of the chapter looks at how agriculture and the dynamics of growing food have changed in the province. It is important to recognise farm families have been both initiators and recipients of the widespread changes occurring around them. Not all families have followed the same path or pursued the same strategies on their farms.

The final section of the chapter considers the interplay of structure and agency in creating social change.

I: Rural New Brunswick, 1951 to 1996

New Brunswick is located on the East Coast of Canada and is known as one of the Maritime provinces. It is bordered by Quebec to the north-west, Nova Scotia to the east and by the American state of Maine to the west and south-west. The province is "almost rectangular in shape, extending 322 kilometres from north to south and 242 kilometres from east to west, (and) ... is bordered by water on most of three sides"[1] (NB Department of Tourism, 1996). It has an area of 73,437 square kilometres and a population of less than 750,000 (NB Department of Tourism, 1996). Ninety-eight per cent of the province's surface is land while two per cent is water. Geographically the terrain is quite varied within the province, the north has mountainous terrain, the interior rolling plateaux, the east is flat and more coastal while the south is quite rugged. There are several major rivers throughout the province providing rich and fertile river valleys for agriculture. The largest is the St. John River which runs almost the length of the province from north to south.

Most New Brunswickers settled along the coasts and in the river valleys since waterways offered the best means of transportation in the late 18th and early 19th century. River boats sailed the river routes in summer. During the spring months timber, which had been cut during the winter, would be hauled from the province's forests[2] and rafted down the river to saw-mills. Eventually it was pulpwood which travelled to paper-mills on river rafts. The rafts passed the potato fields and farm crops which grew along the river banks because most land grants ran from the river banks into the forested areas beyond.

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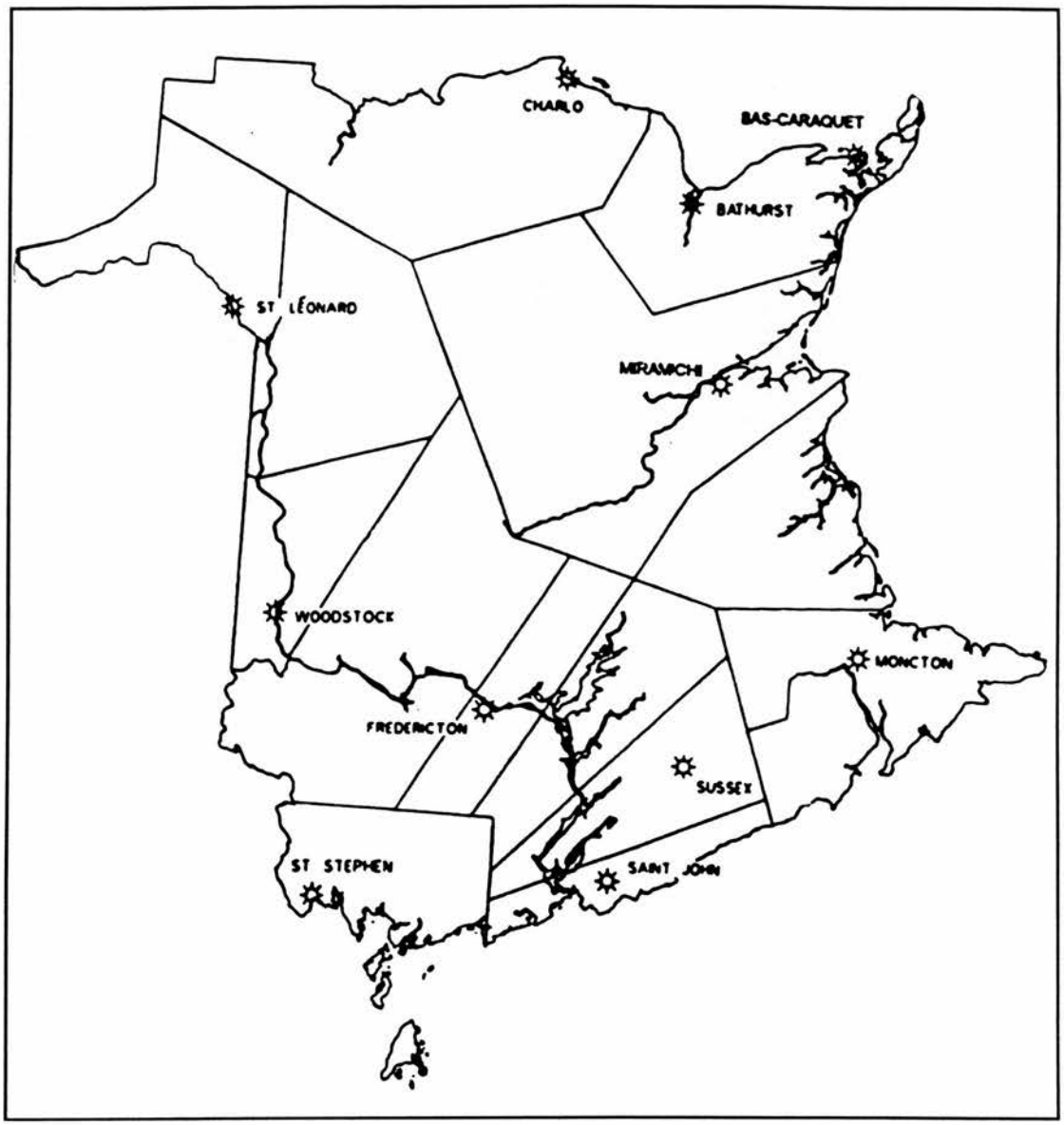
[1] "Beginning at the north, the province's boundaries are the province of Quebec, the Restigouche River and the Chaleur Bay. Its eastern boundary is entirely water, made up of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Northumberland Strait. On the south, the boundary is the Bay of Fundy and Chignecto Bay, with a 24 kilometre land boundary at the south-east corner, where the province is joined to Nova Scotia by the Isthmus of Chignecto. New Brunswick's western boundary borders on the state of Maine and Quebec" (NB, Department of Tourism, 1996).

[2] Even today, eighty-five per cent of New Brunswick's land base is productive forest land, a higher percentage than any other Canadian province. New Brunswick forests supply almost five per cent of Canada's tree harvests per year even though they only represent two and a half per cent of Canada's total productive forest land (NB, Department of Tourism, 1996).

Figure 1: Map of New Brunswick



The roots of the New Brunswick farm community are in its British colonial past, and the freehold tenure of land by the heads of households. New Brunswick was part of the French colony of Acadia until it passed into British hands in the 1750s during the preliminary rounds of the Seven Years War. Its large scale British settlement occurred at the end of the American Revolution in 1784 when thousands of displaced refugees from the losing side in America's first civil war were transported by the Royal Navy into townships laid out by British military engineers and divided into individual land grants to heads of households. The intention was to create a prosperous commercial petit-bourgeois agriculture as the basis for a new British American colony.

However, the development of agriculture in New Brunswick did not work out in quite the way it had been envisioned. The Napoleonic War cut Britain off from its Baltic lumber supply, and New Brunswick became Britain's quintessential 'Timber Colony' (Wynn, 1981). Considerable historical debate has raged over the degree to which lumbering as a competing source of rural income and sponge for farmers' labour, and the preference of colonial timber merchants, shipbuilders and ship owners to supply the colony with agricultural produce from elsewhere, retarded the development of a thriving New Brunswick agricultural sector (Acheson, 1993). New Brunswick's existence as a separate British colony ended with the annexation of New Brunswick into the Dominion of Canada in 1867.

The subsequent history of New Brunswick as a Canadian province did little to further the development of a prosperous commercial agriculture. New Brunswick participated in the wave of industrial development engendered by the National Policy tariffs of 1879[3], but in the 1920s the consolidation of industrial capital in Canada which had started in the last quarter of the 19th century produced a widespread de-industrialisation of the province in favour of Montreal and Toronto (Conway, 1981; Clow, 1984; Brodie, 1990). Commercial agriculture in New Brunswick suffered, and semi-subsistence agriculture became an alternative to emigration in the 1920s (Acheson, 1993). The Great Depression in New Brunswick had begun a decade before 1929, and the province was largely bypassed by industrial expansion during World War Two. In fact, the province continues to have little manufacturing beyond the processing of farming, fishing, forestry and mining products.

After the War, the province did not enjoy anything like the industrial expansion of Ontario during the post-war boom. However it did undergo a wave of urbanisation and modernisation which brought unprecedented prosperity as a side effect of the general pattern of economic growth in Canada. During the 1950s and early 1960s electricity finally reached all of rural New Brunswick and the network of provincial highways and roads were built and improved linking rural communities with the expanding towns and cities.

As Table 2.1 indicates, at the turn of the century, the provincial population was about 331,000; in 1951 it was about 516,000 and in 1996 some 738,000. In European terms, New Brunswick has a relatively small population for its area. Even in Canadian

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[3] For a history of the three National Policies which have governed Canada's economic development see Janine Brodie's book, *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism* (1990).

terms, New Brunswick has remained remarkably rural during a century in which urbanisation has been the general national trend. Over half the New Brunswick population continues to live in rural areas today. In 1971 the rural population hit its low point, which still saw 43.1 per cent of the province's population living in rural areas.

Table 2.1: New Brunswick Population, 1901-1996

Year	N.B. Pop	Rural Pop as % NB Pop	Rural Pop	Farm Pop as % NB Pop	Farm Pop
1901	331, 120	253,835	76.7	—	—
1911	351,889	252,342	71.7	—	—
1921	387,876	263,432	67.9	—	—
1931	408,219	279,279	68.4	180,214	44.1
1941	457,401	313,978	68.6	163,706	35.8
1951	515,697	348,185	67.5	149,916	29.1
1956	554,616	300,326	54.2	128,978	23.3
1961	597,936	319,923	53.5	63,334	10.6
1966	616,788	304,563	49.4	52,042	8.4
1971	634,557	273,410	43.1	27,453	4.3
1976	677,250	322,830	47.7	12,184	1.8
1981	696,403	343,183	49.3	15,436	2.2
1986	709,442	359,139	50.6	12,110	1.7
1991	723,900	378,686	52.3	10,975	1.5
1996	738,133	377,712	51.2	N/A	N/A

Table 2.1 is compiled from 1951 Census of Canada, Table 1; 1956, 1961,1966, 1971, 1976 Census of Canada, Agriculture New Brunswick. 1981 and 1986 figures are from Catalogue 98-133, 1990: 14; 1991 figures are from Catalogue 95-324, 1992: x. The 1996 farm population data will not be available until the summer of 1999.

There are only seven major cities in the province and they are small compared to major centres elsewhere. Saint John located at the south of the province boasts a population of 75,000. The second largest city is Moncton with 57,000 residents, and the provincial capital, Fredericton has a population of 46,500. The remaining four cities each have fewer than 23,000 inhabitants. New Brunswick's urban economy is dominated by services and wholesale and retail sales.

New Brunswick is Canada's only officially bilingual province and thirty-four per cent of the population is French-speaking. Historically the province could be geographically divided along language lines with the north-east being predominantly French-speaking while the south-west was predominantly English-speaking. Language continues to divide the province politically with one political party being primarily devoted to eliminating French language services. Animosities run deep as

'good provincial government jobs' require applicants to be bilingual[4] — a criteria more often met by French speakers than English speakers.

Under Canada's federal arrangements, the provincial government is responsible for administering social services including education, health, welfare and justice in the province. Some responsibilities are jointly shared by federal and provincial governments. Agriculture is one such portfolio which is both a federal and provincial responsibility[5].

At the height of the post-war boom, in the 1960s, the federal government established a system of transfer payments to redistribute national wealth and equalise the opportunities and services available to Canadians in 'poorer' provinces, such as New Brunswick, with those in 'richer' provinces. This policy provided funds with which the province vastly increased the education, health and welfare services it provided to both urban and rural sectors. Notably, New Brunswick joined the rest of Canada in a comprehensive, universally accessible Medicare system jointly funded by provincial and federal monies but provincially administered. Similar arrangements promoted the growth of public education, universities, social services and provincial highways in order to equalise living standards across Canada in the face of highly uneven regional development. The federal government also expanded its transfers of money to individuals through unemployment insurance benefits and the Canada Pension Plan, and to business through grants and tax breaks in a myriad of programs.

The state continued to increase its funding and public services during the 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, general levels of economic activity increased, employment opportunities improved, public services expanded and real incomes rose on a dramatic scale. Even though New Brunswick was still a poorer province within the Canadian federation, the post-war boom enabled the province to join the economic and social mainstream of North American society. It was during these years that a modern rural infrastructure was created and expanded. This period saw rural and small

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[4] In New Brunswick, the term bilingual has lost its general meaning as one who speaks two languages. Here it has come to mean a person who speaks English and French — as any 'bilingual' person will soon learn during a job interview.

[5] The agricultural research centre at Fredericton, New Brunswick has the provincial department of agriculture occupying one half of the building and the federal department of agriculture occupying the other half of the building.

town New Brunswick enjoying an unprecedented level of relative prosperity and growth in public services.

Throughout the decades, the provincial economy has continued to be very reliant on primary resource industries: forestry, fishing and farming. Mining has also played a role in the provincial economy while tourism has been growing in importance. It is these sectors along with government services, education and manufacturing which have provided most New Brunswickers with their employment opportunities. Many New Brunswickers have been seasonal workers reliant on unemployment insurance schemes during the off-season. As a result, the province has been heavily reliant on federal government transfer payments which was a liability when the boom began to go bust in the mid-1970s and the political climate moved sharply to the right.

The arrangements of the post-war 'welfare state' came under attack from neo-liberals as the long boom lost impetus and the national economy moved into a period of instability (Brodie, 1990). Rising unemployment and economic hard times in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s have been accompanied by endless rounds of 'cutbacks' in federal transfer payments, provincial budgets and public services. To date, New Brunswick has not privatised its schools, medical care and social services but these sectors have been eroded and their continuance threatened. Though the withering of the state has affected employment opportunities and incomes generally, its impact has been most strongly felt in rural areas. Here the consolidation of rural schools, the closure of hospitals, the regionalisation of government offices and other measures have eroded small town economies, the availability of public services and the employment opportunities for rural families[6]. Private sector shrinkages and consolidation of bank and other services have paralleled those in the public sector. Rural New Brunswickers face reduced local employment opportunities and local services and increasing costs for employment opportunities and public services located at greater and greater distances in regional centres.

II: The Changing Agricultural Scene

The predominant pattern of agriculture until well after the Second World War was rural 'occupational pluralism'. Families combined subsistence and semi-commercial agriculture with waged work in tree-harvesting and lumber mills, various trades and

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[6] As is currently the case in Britain, taxes continue to rise annually while the services provided by local, provincial and federal governments are cut and eroded.

crafts like blacksmithing, and a variety of waged work in nearby towns[7]. Though there certainly was commercial agriculture in New Brunswick, particularly commercial potato and dairy production, farming in New Brunswick was for most farm families a part of a round of seasonal occupations. As the 1951 Annual Report from the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture notes:

> General conditions for dairying were not improved over the 1949-1950 period. Beef prices were high in comparison with dairy products, the cost of mill feeds was heavy, and many dairy farmers were engaged in the temporarily more lucrative lumber industry at the expense of dairy production (New Brunswick, 1951: 26).

Off-farm opportunities were more abundant and profitable, in the wake of World War II, which quickly led to the large scale abandonment of farming in New Brunswick in the decade immediately following the War.

In 1931, 65 per cent of the rural population farmed. In the middle of the War, half the rural population farmed and even until 1951, a large portion of New Brunswick's rural population continued to farm. But forty years later this is no longer the case, even though half the population continues to live in rural areas. Between 1956 and 1961 half the rural population who had been farming ceased to do so. As Table 2.2 indicates, 43 per cent of the rural population was dependent on farming in 1951 but by 1991 less than 3 per cent of the rural population was farming. In 1951, the farm population represented 29.1% of New Brunswick's population (see Table 2.1). In 1971 — essentially one generation later — only 4.3 per cent of New Brunswick's population continued to farm. Another generation later, in 1991, less than two per cent of the New Brunswick population was farming. Over the same forty year period, the rural population never went below forty percent of the total population. It was in 1971

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[7] This 'pluriactivity' continues to be a part of New Brunswick agriculture especially on small farm holdings where farm families would be living far below the poverty line if they only relied on farm income. For example, over a quarter of the province's dairy and potato farms are extremely small operations producing a minute amount of the province's total milk and potato production. In 1991, 29 percent of New Brunswick's dairy farms milked between one and seventeen cows accounting for a mere four percent of the province's total herd (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93-348, 1992: 322-323). Similarly, 28 percent of the province's potato farms grew 1-17 acres of potatoes but only accounted for one percent of the province's total acreage (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93-348, 1992: 296-297). For a longer discussion of these farms and their economic viability see Appendix A.

The family farm I lived on during my Canada World Youth experience also reflects this scenario. The 'farmer' had 30-50 head of beef cattle and worked from 9 to 5 as a professional plumber. He tended to the animals before going to work in the morning and again when he came home in the evening. Haying, mending fences and so on was done in the evenings and on weekends. The family was completely reliant on his off-farm earnings to maintain the family household and the 'farm' work was considered his hobby.

that the rural population dipped to its lowest point and then it steadily rose during the next twenty years before seeing a small decline in the past five years.

Table 2.2: Farm Population and Census Farms in New Brunswick

	NB Farm Pop	% NB Pop	% Rural Pop that farms	# Census Farms[8]
1921	—	—	—	36,665
1931	180,214	44.1	64.5	34,025
1941	163,706	35.8	52.1	31,889
1951	149,916	29.1	43.1	26,431
1956	128,978	23.3	42.9	22,116
1961	63,334	10.6	19.8	11,786
1966	52,042	8.4	17.1	8,706
1971	27,453	4.3	10.0	5,485
1976	12,184	1.8	3.8	4,551
1981	15,436	2.2	4.5	4,063
1986	12,110	1.7	3.4	3,554
1991	10,975	1.5	2.9	3,252
1996	N/A	N/A	N/A	3,206

As the farm population declined in New Brunswick, so too did the number of farms. Table 2.2 illustrates that between 1956 and 1961 not only did half the farm population[9] disappear but half the census farms[10] disappeared as well.

New Brunswick was not the only province experiencing such social and economic changes immediately after the Second World War. The rapid changes occurring throughout Canada prompted the Dominion of Canada[11] to begin five year agriculture

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[8] In 1996 Statistic Canada began to include Christmas tree growers in their count of census farms. Therefore the 1996 Census actually reports 3,405 farms in New Brunswick since it includes the 199 Christmas tree growers. I have excluded these Christmas tree farms from the 1996 figure for better comparability to the previous years.

[9] Prior to 1981, rural farm population referred to all persons living in rural areas in dwellings situated on census farms. Today, farm population refers "to all persons who are members of a farm operator's household and living on a farm in a rural or urban area" (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-324, 1992: xxviii).

[10] The definition of a census farm has changed over the years: "In 1966, the definition included any agricultural holding of one acre or more with sales of agricultural products during the 12 month period prior to the census, of $50 or more. By 1991 this definition had evolved to include any agricultural holding which produced an agricultural product for sale. It is expected that all definitions used during this period are quite comparable" (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 21-522E, 1993: 10).

[11] In 1971 the Dominion Bureau of Canada became known as Statistics Canada. All the censuses carried out by the Dominion Bureau of Canada are now housed at Statistics Canada in Ottawa.

and population[12] censuses throughout the country in order to record the magnitude of ongoing changes:

> By 1956, rapid economic growth and development created the need for national demographic information at more frequent intervals [than every ten years]. To meet this need, the five-year Census of Agriculture and Population were extended to the entire country [five year census were already being conducted in the Prairie provinces], and have been taken simultaneously ever since (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-323, 1992: xix).

This decision permits a more focused and accurate analysis of the changing farm community. The ten year census would have indicated a 55.4 per cent loss of farms between 1951 and 1961; and a 53.5 per cent drop in census farms between 1961 and 1971. However, in both these decades the biggest decline in census farms occurred in the latter half of each decade — evidence of the unevenness of the long boom. Between 1956 and 1961, 46.7 per cent of the farms ceased to operate and between 1966 and 1971, there was a thirty-seven per cent drop in census farm numbers. Since the mid-1970s, the number of census farms has continued to decline but at a slower rate. Likewise, the percentage losses in farm population are greater in the later half of each decade. Between 1951 and 1961, 57.8 per cent of the farm population stopped farming and 56.7 per cent left between 1961 and 1971. Between 1956 and 1961 there was a 50.9 per cent drop in farm population and between 1966 and 1971, the farm population declined by 47.2 per cent while the number of census farms only declined by 37 per cent.

These rapid losses in farm population and census farms, prompted the New Brunswick government of the time to conduct a three year 'Agricultural Resources Study' (ARS) between October 1974 and November 1977. The mandate of the ARS study was:

> ... to initiate a major study of all aspects of the management and utilization of the Province's agricultural resources. The overall objective of the Study is to find ways to promote the fullest use of agricultural resources in such a way as to maximize farm income, to strengthen the vitality of the family farm, to encourage new job creation in food processing industries and to increase food production (Parks, ARS, 1977: 3).

The study documents the state's interest in sustaining family farms while promoting the growth of the food processing industry — an industry which was and is dependent

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[12] Changes in agriculture had far reaching effects on the Canadian population and until 1976, the Agriculture Census recorded both the rural and farm population. However, since 1981 population data is no longer included in agricultural census data which has made it difficult to access information on the farm population. This would appear to be more reflective of dwindling numbers than declining economic importance. It is interesting to note that as the farm population has decreased, the interest in farm women has increased.

on ever increasing amounts of raw material at ever lower prices for its own sustained growth and profits. Therefore, in order to meet the processors needs, the state encouraged farms to expand, mechanise, and modernise into 'cost-effective commercial operations'.

This agricultural restructuring has resulted in many changes in New Brunswick's rural communities: many mixed farms have become specialised farms, small farms have become big farms, mechanisation has replaced physical labour, machines have replaced horse power, and the farm community has shrunk in size and population. Many inefficient, 'welfare' farms have been pushed out of business and replaced by larger, cost-efficient production units. Yet, in 1996, 46.5 per cent of New Brunswick's farms continue to gross less than $10,000 in farm cash receipts — evidence that subsistence and hobby farms have not been eliminated from the agricultural landscape (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-175-XPB, 1997). On the other hand, almost a quarter of the province's farms earn over $100,000 in gross farm receipts (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-175-XPB, 1997).

Indeed, the meaning of small and medium sized farms has changed in the last 50 years. Small and medium sized operations today are much larger than the larger farms of the early 1950s, with much larger proportional capital investment, technological intensity and output. As a whole, farms have grown bigger and individual farm output has expanded; mixed farming has moved towards specialisation; low mechanised farms have become highly mechanised farms; self-financed debt-free farms have become bank-financed heavily-in-debt operations; ecologically sustainable integrated farming practices have given way to more productive but unsustainable farming techniques; and farms dependent on their own inputs of seed, fertiliser and pest control have become dependent on chemicals, seeds and biocides purchased from multinational agrochemical companies.

The trend across Canada has been for fewer but bigger farms to produce more. For example, Statistics Canada argues:

> Improved efficiency in the dairy industry has resulted in increased production per cow. This has been a major factor in the reduction in dairy cow numbers over the past twenty years....The number of kilolitres of milk sold per year has remained virtually unchanged over the past twenty years. Between 1961 and 1981 the number of kilolitres of milk sold per cow increased 68.3%. The end result has been that the number of dairy cows decreased by 40.3%" (Statistics Canada, Catalogue #96-920, 1984: 32).

In New Brunswick, between 1971 and 1991, the "total number of dairy cows decreased 36 per cent, while the total number of farms with dairy cows decreased 77

per cent" (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-324, 1992: ix). Similarly, fewer potato farms are planting surprisingly similar acreages. In 1961, 8,190 farms in New Brunswick grew 54,165 acres of potatoes, while 439 farms grew 54,064 acres of potatoes in 1996 (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93-358-XPB, 1997: 18-19).

In 1996, potatoes accounted for 23 per cent of all farm cash income in the province, while dairy accounted for 21 per cent of farm cash income, poultry and eggs for 19 per cent with other commodities accounting for less than ten per cent each (New Brunswick, Agriculture Statistics, 1996: Figure 1). Potatoes, dairy and cattle account for nearly sixty per cent of the province's average $270 million annual farm income (New Brunswick, Department of Tourism, 1996).

Table 2.3: Potato and Dairy Farms in New Brunswick

	# Census Farms	#Potato Farms	% Census Farms Growing Potatoes	#Dairy Farms	% Census Farms Producing Dairy Products
1921	36,665	32,442	88.5	31,494	85.9
1931	34,025	29,053	85.4	27,301	80.2
1941	31,889	27,395	85.9	26,790	84.0
1951	26,431	20,004	75.7	19,751	74.7
1956	22,116	14,953	67.6	16,107	72.8
1961	11,786	8,190	69.5	9,211	78.2
1966	8,706	5,471	62.8	5,629	64.7
1971	5,485	1,212	22.1	2,800	51.0
1976	4,551	997	21.9	1,702	37.4
1981	4,063	740	18.2	1,264	31.1
1986	3,554	547	15.4	879	24.7
1991	3,252	442	13.6	637	19.6
1996	3,206	439	13.7	496	15.5

Table constructed from Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93-358-XPB, 1997: 18-19, 141.

Even though they remain the two most important agricultural commodities in the province, Table 2.3 indicates the dramatic decline in the number of dairy and potato farms over the past seventy-five years. Before 1971 farms could be counted in more than one commodity — but from 1971 onwards Statistics Canada started classifying farms according to the farm product which represented at least 51 percent of total farm production based on gross farm receipts. This new method of classification effectively exaggerates the amount of specialisation on farms. It also accounts for the dramatic drop in the number of potato and dairy farms between 1966 and 1971: less than one quarter of the farms growing potatoes in 1966 are recognised as potato farms in 1971 while only one half of the dairy farms continued to be counted as such.

As farms have capitalised, expanded and mechanised, they have disappeared at an unprecedented speed[13]. The majority of New Brunswick farms which followed the trend to expand were not able to withstand the debts they procured in order to expand production. High interest rates and continuing low prices for their commodities created severe financial problems for farms built on credit[14]. Most farms that attempted to engage in the capital accumulation cycle went bust. They expanded production, bought machinery, extended their credit and at some point the anticipated accumulation cycle never materialised. A relative few were more successful and continue to operate within the cycle, and sustain the elusive promise of 'success'.

But even for successful farms there is no security. Stress, debt, off-farm employment and fear of foreclosure are as much a part of the farm enterprise as the soil and the seeds. As some farms go under, others continue to struggle and a few apparently thrive — buying out their neighbours and expanding operations at a steady pace. This causes great anxiety and tension among family members who have their livelihood caught up in the success or failure of the farm operation. Family farms are not immune to family violence in all its forms, suicide and mental anguish as they try to manage the pressures of the cost-price squeeze and ride the waves of one financial crisis after another. While rural sociologists focus attention on the effects of the cost-price squeeze for the success or failure of farm enterprises, it is really the family who experiences all its pressures, anxiety and heart break.

III. Structure, Agency and Social Change

In fact, the world Barbara and Betty live in today is quite different than the one they grew up in — and started farming in. The changes taking place around them are partially a result of their own actions and the actions of their neighbours, government officials, bank managers and so on. People create structural changes. Social structures do not 'act', people within them act and it is their actions which accumulate and culminate in changes at the macro level. Changes at the macro level are evidence of changes in people's everyday lived experiences. For example, the changes we see in

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[13] Basically as the structure of agriculture has changed, the inputs and outputs of farming are increasingly controlled by a few highly integrated 'agri-business' corporations. As everything in agriculture becomes controlled by vertically integrated agribusiness corporations, farmers are regularly forced to pay more for their inputs from agribusiness than they recover from their sales to agribusiness. In other words, the costs of farming are usually greater than the income from farming. This phenomena, known as the cost-price squeeze, has been suggested by many as the reason family farms are disappearing (Kneen, 1995; Koski, 1982; MacFarlane, 1987; McLaren, 1977; McLaughlin, 1990; Pugh, 1989; Senopi, 1980; Stewart, 1974).

[14] According to Pugh, every year in Canada 4,000 families are forced out of farming (1991:32).

New Brunswick's farm community are the result of some people buying the land and expanding while others are packing up and going out of business. People's earlier actions, therefore, create the structures and situations family farms find themselves facing today.

Betty and Barbara's family farms have survived during this post World War II period of rapid economic expansion and growth in New Brunswick. They have managed to keep farming when the vast majority of family farms in this province have not. What's more, they did so by pursuing quite different strategies. Their own lives, family farm enterprises and work histories have been shaped and influenced by the situations they found themselves in at particular historical moments. Their responses in turn shaped and influenced the farms and communities they currently live in. We must not forget that despite the changes going on around them and the changes they themselves experienced in their own work activities and farm operations, Betty and Barbara are survivors — as are the other women interviewed for this thesis — because their family farms persist.

All of the women interviewed for this research project are dealing with a changing farm community, changing family farms, changing families and changing work situations. Changes are occurring on many levels (locally, provincially, nationally and globally) and in many spheres (economic, political, social and cultural) simultaneously. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to account for all the changes taking place within each of these dimensions. This thesis is primarily concerned with farm wives' work activities on the farm, in the household and the larger community; and how and why farm wives' work differs from one farm operation to the next. Specifically, it examines farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. It argues a largely unrecognised influence on farm wives' work is 'commodity' production, i.e. the particular product the farm is producing. 'Commodity' is here a shorthand not only for the product itself, but the conditions under which it is produced, the techniques and means by which it is produced on the farm, the labour demands engendered by its production, and the arrangements under which it is sold and marketed. Throughout the thesis I argue the farm 'commodity' being produced creates specific situations for the family household and farm enterprise to which farm wives respond. Furthermore, I would argue farm wives respond to the situations they find on their family farms and in their communities with the intention of keeping their household operating, making the farm enterprise work, and their communities viable.

As Barbara and Betty's stories attest, everyone has not followed the same path in their efforts to keep farming. People may find themselves in similar situations but they do not necessarily respond in the same manner. One farm family may respond to the rising cost of farm inputs by cutting back on household expenditures and family income while another may borrow more heavily. Different responses will result in different farm operations and different trajectories. Options and choices which are available at one point in time may not be available at a later point in time. Or options not currently available may become available. The impact of social changes on individual actions will vary depending upon who the actors are and what they are trying to achieve.

Historical evidence suggests our social world is constantly changing and with it our work environments, organisations and everyday lived experiences. Both individually and collectively, we respond to our social world. Perhaps ironically it is our responses, choices, actions and reactions to that social world which shape and change its future. I say ironically because so often we are dissatisfied with the structures and organisations we find ourselves working and operating within — yet some people worked to create this social environment, some people pursued this strategy rather than another one.

While the focus here is on 'family' farms, we should not forget large organisations and structures can be changing as well as small ones. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the global economy are all changing. Macro level structural changes must be understood as the consequences of people's actions as much as the changes in family farming. International organisations, businesses and governments are not machines or entities which act in and of themselves. They are made up of people who act on their behalf and in their name. The global economy is the result of human action at a large number of levels from the individual consumer to corporations and unions to nations and trade and tariff agreements amongst nation states.

Sociology is interested in how and why one kind of society or one social situation emerges rather than another. In other words, it examines how a society is organised and what the consequences of organising a society in a particular way are. Since few societies remain static, much thought and consideration has been given to how and why societies change. In fact, we could argue the only constant in life is change — some changes are minute while others are enormous, some have a big impact on our lives while others have none at all. In order to appreciate the impact particular social,

economic, cultural and political changes will have, we need to consider the specific processes and contexts within which these changes are occurring.

In spite of the admonition of leading figures from C. Wright Mills to Anthony Giddens to be conscious of history, sociology as a discipline remains most concerned with the immediate present. We often try to understand the character and shape of our own social lives and our own social world in isolation from the larger historical processes which shaped it. We are not the only age to have understood ourselves to be at the cutting edge of action and activities, to be more 'modern' and progressive than our ancestors. This outlook frequently leads to the perceived need to define the contemporary as a New Age. The dominant sociology of the 1950s and 1960s delighted in the notion that the post-World War II economic, political and social arrangements were the height of 'modernity'. Likewise, those confronting the new global economy are want to proclaim the contemporary situation as the new 'post-modern' cutting edge of civilisation and the pinnacle of economic development. The label may be new but the sociological penchant surely isn't.

Our efforts to explain our everyday world, the institutions and society we live in has produced many theories, paradigms, schools of thought and subdisciplines. At the two extremes of thought, we find structuralist theories on one end and individual action theories on the other. How to reconcile the macro social system and the micro everyday world of individuals has been the concern of many theorists. To see the interaction between the two, to move beyond individual idiosyncrasies and see the general patterns, the similarities and differences between groups of people is what C. Wright Mills (1959) calls the 'sociological imagination'. Hale argues that both Abrams and Giddens have attempted to address this structure versus agency question by viewing sociology as an historical study:

> They both argue that human actions produce the structures of society that people later experience as constraining or determining their actions, e.g. "the capitalist system". Abrams and Giddens accept the classical Marxist notion that we make our own history, but not in circumstances of our own choosing. They emphasize the critical point that these circumstances were produced by other people, or perhaps even by ourselves, through choices made at earlier points in time. When social theorists focus on a narrow, fixed period of time, it makes sense to analyse human actions as constrained by social structures. But, given a longer time frame, we see that these structures were themselves produced by human actions (Hale, 1995: 14).

This thesis aims to understand the wider dynamics of farm wives' work, the historical processes farm wives find themselves in, and the interaction between structure and agency in their lives.

Farm women and their families are responding to the situations they find themselves in. As a sociologist, I am interested in studying the situations society places this particular group of people in and how they respond. Such a research agenda leads directly to the heart of C. Wright Mills' (1959: 6-7) classical questions:

1. How is this society organised and what are the consequences of organising it in this way?

2. What is the history of this society and the way it is organised? How does the historical period affect the direction and events occurring within society?; and

3. What kind of 'social structures' is this society producing? What kind of people are coming to prevail as a consequence of these social structures?

Even though Mills' intent was to produce a grand theory which could be applied to 'society' and all its institutions and elements — and that is not the purpose of this research — his questions provide a valuable blueprint for analysing farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada.

When studying farm wives, the family, on the micro level, and the agricultural industry, on the macro level, have been the usual foci of concern. Seldom has the intermediate level — that of the farm as a unit of production — been seriously considered as a starting point of study. This research project considers how 'family' farming is organised and the consequences for farm wives' work of organising farm production in a particular way. By focusing on one geographical area, New Brunswick, government policy and regional differences remain constant. The analysis can, therefore, concentrate on the particulars of family farming and the consequences of farming specific commodities without being bogged down with regional differences. At the same time, it must be recognised farm wives are not working in an isolated, static environment. Their family households and farm enterprises are situated in an industry which continues to experience substantive changes. We need to consider what impact their changing 'family' farms and communities have on their work. To do so enables us to ask: How do historical processes and events shape and influence the work farm wives undertake on their family farms and in their communities? And given the present day situation of 'family' farms in New Brunswick, what can farm wives on dairy and potato farms expect their work to be like in the future?

CHAPTER THREE

STUDYING FARM WIVES' WORK ON DAIRY AND POTATO FARMS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Farm wives came to the forefront of public attention in Canada in 1974 when Irene Murdoch lost her appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. For six years she had been in the Alberta courts seeking half the ranch property she and her estranged husband had acquired and farmed during their twenty-five years of marriage. Her battle ended in defeat because the Supreme Court upheld the trial judge's decision: Irene Murdoch was not entitled to a half share of the farm property because she could not prove she had financially contributed to the acquisition of the ranch property, nor was there any formal partnership agreement with her husband, and her name was not on the property deed. Her extensive work activities on the ranch did not entitle her to a half share of the property since she had only done the work expected of any 'ranch wife' (Mills *et. al.*, 1975: 425).

During the trial Irene Murdoch testified she worked outside with her husband, 'just as a man would', doing any and all work which needed to be done. Her ranch work included:

> Haying, raking, swathing, moving, driving trucks and tractors and teams, quietening horses, taking cattle back and forth to the reserve, dehorning, vaccinating, branding, anything that was to be done (Mills *et. al.*, 1975: 443).

Moreover she managed and worked the ranch by herself during the five months of the year her husband left the ranch to work for the provincial Forestry Service as a fire spotter. In the end, Irene Murdoch may have worked tirelessly but the courts concurred: her labour did not represent a financial investment in the properties her husband owned. This conclusion outraged farm wives, feminists and the one dissenting Supreme Court judge.

The Murdoch case became a *cause celebre* for women in Canada, who demanded changes in the matrimonial property laws. According to them, marriage represented a partnership between a husband and wife. The assets accumulated during a marriage should not be the sole possession of the husband. A wife's labour needed to be

counted by the courts, not taken for granted in the event of death, separation or divorce.[1]

For feminist scholars in Canada the Murdoch case created a new arena for studying women and work. The study of farm women's work, women's contributions to agriculture and efforts to improve women's social and economic status was strongly influenced by this court case (Bruners, 1985; Hale, 1995; Wiebe, 1995). The Murdoch case effectively set the research foci in Canada to farm women's varied work activities and how their labour directly and indirectly contributes to family farming in an effort to document and recognise women's investments in agriculture.

Building on this tradition, this thesis is about women, women's work, and women's contributions to family farm operations. Specifically it is a study of farm wives' work on family farms producing milk and potatoes in New Brunswick, Canada. It is not interested in proving farm women are working on the farm, off the farm, in the household and in the community — as previous researchers were forced to do. It accepts, the now widely acknowledged fact, farm women are working in all of these spheres. Instead this thesis is interested in how the farms women live on affect their work lives. Specifically it examines *how* the family farm, the commodity it produces and the changing farm community shape and influence farm wives' work activities on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. This examination leads the thesis to conclude that variations in farm women's work situations need to be better understood in order to construct accurate and more useful theoretical models of their work.

This chapter introduces the specifics of the case study. The chapter begins with an examination of the three key concepts which form the basis of this research project: farm, wives and work. The second section looks at how farm wives' work has — or in some instances has not — been studied. The third section describes the parameters and scope of the case study. In particular it explains why this research project focuses on milk and potato production in New Brunswick, Canada. The fourth section establishes what the thesis does and does not do. The final section introduces the remaining parts of the thesis.

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[1] Bruners (1989: 19) notes: "Since the Murdoch case, the law has changed substantially and in all provinces the wife is entitled to one half of all the family assets. All provinces have legislation protecting the homestead from being sold or mortgaged without the wife's consent."

I: Farm, Wives and Work

There is no apparent ambiguity in the phrase 'farm women's work'. We are talking about the work of women who live on farms. But what kind of farms do they live on? Who are these farm women? and What kind of work do they do? This section looks more closely at the three key concepts embedded in a study of 'farm women's work' as they apply to this case study: farm, wives and work.

A. "Farm Living is the Life for Me"[2]

We begin with the farm and farming because the type of farm women find themselves living on will create particular situations for them and their work. By definition farms grow crops or raise livestock[3]. Farms are differentiated by the crops they grow and the animals they raise. Some farms grow wheat while others grow potatoes. Some farms raise pigs for pork while others raise dairy cattle for milk. Some farms are highly specialised and only produce for one market. Others are diversified combining two or more products.

What a farm sets out to produce defines what needs to be done — but not how it gets done. A potato farm will grow potatoes. A dairy farm will milk cows. Yet how these products are produced will vary from one farm operation to another depending upon how the farm is organised. Is the farm big or small? Is there hired labour or only family labour? Are chemical or organic fertilisers used? Is the farm capital or labour intensive? Is the goal to maintain a 'way of life' or maximise profits? The way particular dairy farms or potato farms organise their work activities and get the job of growing potatoes and milking cows done will vary. But the fact they are still trying to milk cows or grow potatoes ties them together in a common endeavour and, as we shall see in Chapter Five, delineates an important — but often overlooked — factor influencing the work of farm wives.

What a farm produces has been less noteworthy for agricultural economists and rural sociologists studying farming and farm life than the large scale structural changes occurring in the agricultural sector. Agricultural economists have identified economies

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[2] This phrase was part of the *Green Acres'* theme song. *Green Acres* was a classic 1960s American sitcom, starring Eddy Albert and Eva Gabor, contrasting rural and city life.

[3] Frequently a distinction is made between arable crops and livestock and this thesis follows such a division in looking at potato and dairy farming. However, as we will explore in Chapter Five, broader issues need to be discussed than whether or not the farm is growing crops or raising livestock to study the impact of farm production on women's work and family households.

of scale, changes in technology, levels of mechanisation and management efficiency as the major forces driving change. Political economists have tried to describe the same changes in terms of the growth of agribusiness, the concentration and centralisation of capital within farming, the persistence of petit-bourgeois production and the failure of capital to eliminate family farming. An extension of this tentacle of the literature has been the survival of the family farm, part-time farming, and the emergence of pluriactivity[4] on family farms. Both these structural approaches tend to talk about farming as if it is an abstract entity without people when they discuss social change and the transformation of agriculture from small, mixed family farm operations to larger, more specialised family business enterprises.

Given the structural changes agriculture has undergone, it is necessary to identify what farms we are referring to in this study. Perhaps the most useful farm classification scheme in the Canadian context is that proposed by Darrell McLaughlin (1990), a sociologist and potato farmer. McLaughlin identifies four types of farms with varying forms of production: the hobby/subsistence farm, the modern petit-bourgeois 'family farm', the corporate family farm and the corporate farm. The first two types involve petit-bourgeois production, while the last two are forms of capitalist production. Specifically:

Hobby/Subsistence farms are residual farms not engaged in commodity production for significant commercial sale. These farm units have no interest in or impact on the market. Most of these operations have at least one person or more engaged in off farm labour as the farm does not provide them with a living.

Family farms are petit-bourgeois operations trying to maintain a "way of life" while keeping the assets they have built up over the years. They rely largely on family labour and are engaged in commercial commodity production. McLaughlin argues this type of farming is usually perceived by its participants as a "way of life" rather than as a profit oriented business. Staying in farming and making a living, not profits and expansion, are the concerns of these farmers.

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[4] Perhaps it would be more accurate to say the re-emergence of pluriactivity and part-time farming. Pluriactivity refers to a mix of economic activities being conducted on farms which was the norm a century ago when farms were mixed operations. In this case, pluriactivity is simply the reappearance of a more traditional pattern of farm life which modernisation sought to destroy. Carter's (1979) study of farming in Northern Scotland between 1840-1914 indicates farmers always had a need for cash income. During this period farmers worked off the farm to earn the cash needed to pay taxes so they wouldn't lose their farms. Today farm families still combine off-farm employment with farming in order to continue farming (Bartlett, 1986; Fuller *et. al.*, 1992; Smiley, 1996; Winson, 1996).

Corporate family farms are small capitalist operations which are family owned and operated but dependent on wage labour. They represent small capitalist enterprise in farming and think of themselves as a family farm*business*. They are engaged in the effort to expand their operations to create a self sustaining cycle of capital accumulation. This group is the most important group for policy makers, and tends to be the most influential in "mainstream" farm organisations (like Federations of Agriculture) and in state policy formation.

Corporate farms are corporate owned and operated. Employees are hired as managers and wage workers, to manage and do the manual labour, like any other capitalist enterprise. Workers do not participate in decision-making but execute company plans. Because corporate farms employ only wage labour, they are not part of the 'family farm' sector. They are factories-in-the-field.

In effect, McLaughlin argues there are two kinds of contemporary *commercial* 'family farms' not one. Both the *family farm* and the *corporate family farm*[5] are family farms in Whatmore's useful definition of family farms as those farms which "combine family property ownership with family labour in commercial agricultural production" (Whatmore, 1990: 12). Corporate family farms rely on regular and steady supplies of wage labour from outside the family to operate on the scale they do, but they are not hands-off operations for the farm family which owns them. Family owned farms where the farm labour is done exclusively by wage labour and where management is by hired managers are corporate farms in this scheme.[6]

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[5] It should be noted McLaughlin's typology reflects Statistics Canada classification of a farm's operating arrangements. Statistics Canada reports whether or not farms are individual or family farms, family corporations or non-family corporations. Their categorisation includes three additional operating arrangements: a partnership with a written agreement, a partnership without a written agreement and those with other operating arrangements. In 1996, New Brunswick's 3,405 farms had the following operating arrangements: 2,360 were individual or family farms, 427 were family corporations and 95 were non-family corporations, 104 had a partnership with a written agreement, 390 had a partnership without a written agreement and 29 farms had other operating arrangements (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93-356-XPB, 1997: 1). Statistics Canada is, of course, looking at the legal organisation of enterprises while McLaughlin is examining the social relations of production which characterise enterprises.

[6] Shucksmith (1993) makes a similar distinction between 'family farms' in his analysis of farming in Scotland. He argues there are accumulators, conservatives and disengagers. Accumulators have larger farms, work longer hours, are better educated and younger on average than conservatives. They want their children to farm and they are risk takers. Conservatives think their children should learn a trade, they have often inherited the farm and don't want non-agricultural activities in the land. Accumulators would be reminiscent of McLaughlin's corporate family farms while conservatives would be reminiscent of McLaughlin's modern family farms.

This research project is not concerned with subsistence/hobby farms or with corporate farms. The former do not make their living from growing and selling foodstuffs and the latter do not involve families in farming. Since this thesis is a study of farm wives' work it is concerned with those families whose livelihood comes from family farming. In short the family farms engaged in commercial agriculture.

Focusing on those family farms engaged in commercial agriculture is essential for any analysis or discussion of a farm's commodity production. While a farm's 'commodity' is often used to distinguish kinds of farming, commodity also refers to goods or services produced for sale in the market (Marshall: 1994: 389). In this thesis, 'commodity' encompasses both meanings and can be defined as: the different agricultural products farms produce for sale in the market. This thesis is interested in dairy farms producing milk for sale and potato farms producing potatoes for sale. 'Dairy' farms and 'potato' farms thus reflect the agricultural product each particular farm is producing and trying to market. The discussion of commodity in this thesis also involves or invokes a number of matters *associated with* the production of agricultural commodities and their sale. Namely: marketing, work rhythms and production processes created by commodity. These dimensions of commodity will be developed in Chapter Five as they are needed to understand the findings of this study.

In summary, this thesis focuses on family farms producing milk or potatoes. As we will explore in Part Two, family farming means keeping the family and the farm together under frequently precarious conditions. For the most part, the family farms in this study have succeeded in weathering the ups and downs of the industry. They are survivors. In fact, they are survivors in two senses: one, their families are still in farming[7]; and two, their nuclear families are still intact[8].

B. The Farmer Takes a Wife

Precisely because their nuclear families are still intact[9], this research is interested in women's familial relationship to the family farm enterprise. Even though they may be

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[7] Two families in my study have, in fact, stopped farming. Denise and her husband retired in the mid-1970s while Dixie and her husband sold their farm in the mid-1980s in order to pursue another vocation.

[8] Debra is a widow but she continues to farm with her mother-in-law, father-in-law and children.

[9] Only 3.4 % of New Brunswick farm operators were separated or divorced in 1991; 2.4% were widowed; 10.5% had never married and 83.7% were married (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-324, 1992: Table 35).

farmers in their own right, farm women are usually attached to the family farm as daughters or as wives and mothers.[10] Little attention has been paid to daughters or the contributions made by children to family farming and, unfortunately, it is not within the scope of this study to do so.

Leckie (1992: 216) has noted most research on farm women has focused on white, Anglo-Saxon farm women and this research project is no exception. However, unlike Leckie, I would argue most research on 'farm women' in industrialised countries has implicitly focused on white, European farm wives. White, European farm wives have been the target of most research because researchers have been overwhelmingly interested in 'family farming' and adult women are usually attached to family farms as wives. These same family farms are generally owned and operated by white, European men who have usually married women with similar backgrounds.[11] This thesis aims to highlight and make explicit the relationship of being a wife rather than ignore, conceal or mask it under the guise of 'farm women'[12]. In this way, this thesis follows in the tradition of researchers who have explicitly identified farm wives as their object of study (Gasson, 1989; Ghorayshi, 1989; Whatmore, 1991b).

Peggy Ross (1985) argues we lack a knowledge of farm women precisely because we have focused on women as wives and mothers. She notes:

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[10] In 1991, 18.2% or 770 of the 4,235 farm operators in New Brunswick were women, 81.8% or 3,465 of the 4,235 farm operators in the province were men. In terms of the female operators: 130 were the sole operators of their farms (3.1%) while 640 (15.1%) shared the operation of the farm with at least one other person (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-324, 1992: Table 35). Only 5 of the farms with two or more operators were operated by females only while 620 were run by both male and female operators (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-324, 1992: Table 33). In effect, less than 5% of New Brunswick farms are solely owned and operated by women even though 18.2% of New Brunswick farmers were women in 1991.

[11] In Kirkwood's (1984: 151) discussion of settler wives in southern Rhodesia she argues when they married "like attracted like", I would contend the same dynamic has been present in the industrialised world's agricultural sector. Men marry women who have similar background characteristics to their own. This also appears to be the case among the farm wives I interviewed in New Brunswick, Canada.

[12] 'Farm women' is a term which has come to encompass all women connected to agriculture whether they be farm wives, farm operators or farm labourers. Padavic's (1993) discussion of women's employment in agriculture in the United States points out how wide ranging 'farm women' and their experiences can be. Like Padavic, Wall's (1994) work on women farm labourers in Central Canada raises the issue of immigrant workers and their poor working conditions. These women have not been the focus of research concerned with 'family farming' yet they are clearly women engaged in agricultural production. It is a misnomer to talk of 'farm women' as an all encompassing label which addresses all the issues and concerns facing women in this sector. This thesis studies one group — farm wives — since, as we will explore more fully in Part Two, being attached to the family farm as a wife places particular demands on a woman's time and energy.

> Almost all of the sociological studies of the 1950s and 1960s approach the topic of farm women as 'they related to men and family life — as wives and mothers — and restrict the analysis to the spheres which included these functions' (Ross: 1985: 19).

While I don't disagree with her position that we have too readily focused on family dimensions, I would argue the present practice is to down play or ignore the relationship of being a wife and mother[13] in favour of analytic categories, like male and female roles, which are devoid of clear social relationships. The social relations which tie men and women together on family farms are further veiled with our use of terminology like 'farm women' rather than 'farm wives'. Such language enables an ideological separation between family and work to persist even though such a distinction is often meaningless for women attached to family farms as wives and committed to family farming as a family endeavour (Carbert, 1995; Ghorayshi, 1989; Wiebe, 1995) .

More women are attached to family farms in Canada as wives of farm operators than as farm operators. Using Statistics Canada unpublished 1981 Agriculture Population Linkage data, Pamela Smith (1987: 142-143) examined the marital status of operators and spouses on family farms with one operator. In 1981, in Canada, there were 8,085 female operators: 60% were married, 30.5% were widowed, 7% were separated or divorced and only 2.5% had never married. During the same year, there were 260,510 females on family farms with one operator who were the spouses, i.e. the wives, of male farmers. In effect, 97 per cent of women who live on family farms with one operator do so as wives. So even though statistical evidence indicates women who own and operate their own farms are frequently married,[14] this is not their primary attachment to the farm and they are therefore not included in this study.[15] This

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[13] In my own experience, those farm wives who want to be treated as partners in the farm enterprise and farmers in their own right are awkward about their status as farm wives. They prefer the term 'farm women' which has come to encompass all women living and working on farms regardless of the myriad of differences amongst them. I would argue this only serves to weaken their analysis and political action rather than strengthen it since what is missing is an appreciation of how reflective differences in women's work are of differences in their husbands' work.

[14] In her discussion of female farmers Leckie (1992: 185) shows only small differences have occurred since Smith's analysis: in 1991, half of the farm women operators in Canada were married and were therefore wives as well as operators, while 33% were widowed and the remainder single, separated and divorced.

[15] I did conduct one interview with a female farm owner and operator. She represents the statistically small group of female operators who are single. The information from that interview is not included as part of the case study data but where appropriate elements of the interview will be discussed.

thesis is concerned with women who are attached to the farm through the social relationship of marriage.[16]

According to Weitzman (1981: 2), when two people marry they enter into a legal contract which may be spoken or unspoken. The traditional marriage contract embodies four provisions:

1. The husband is the head of the household;
2. The husband is responsible for support;
3. The wife is responsible for domestic services; and
4. The wife is responsible for child care, the husband for child support.

These provisions have traditionally formed the basis for resolving legal conflicts between husbands and wives. But until the 1980s, marriage did not mean an equal partnership between husbands and wives in Canada. Before changes to the matrimonial property laws, if their husband died without a will, a wife's share of the family household property was only one-third with the remaining two-thirds going to the husband's estate and the children's inheritance.[17]

Delphy and Leonard (1985, 1992) point out wives are reliant on their husband's good will for economic resources during a marriage and there is no guarantee that family resources are shared equally among members of the household. In their discussion of farm families in France they indicate food was not shared equally or according to individual needs but distributed according to an individual's status and rank within the family. Such inequities among family members have led researchers to study household composition, power and decision-making, internal relations of production and inheritance on family farms, that is the gendered nature of family farming. These topics are, however, not the primary focus of this research.

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[16] Since I am studying women who remain married, divorce or separation and the dissolution of the farm are not issues raised in this thesis.

[17] It was this law which gave the McCain brothers the start up money to build McCain Foods first french fry plant in 1957: "Without a will, the ownership of McCain Produce [their father's company] was split by law. Laura [their mother] automatically received one-third of everything A.D. [their father] owned, including the company. The remainder was divided equally among the six children, which meant each received about one-ninth of the stocks and ownership in McCain Produce. The stocks worked out to a value of $40,000 per child (Waldie, 1997: 45). The two older brothers, Bob and Andrew, were working at McCain Produce and contributed $20,000 each to their younger brother's new business venture while Harrison and Wallace each invested $30,000 into the newly formed McCain Foods" (Waldie, 1997: 59).

This research is more concerned with the issues raised by Janet Finch (1983) in her study of "wives' incorporation into men's work". Finch (1983: 1-2) argues there is a two-way relationship between a wife's work and her husband's work, in that:

> ... a man's work imposes a set of structures *upon* his wife's life, which consequently constrain her choices about the living of her own life, and set limits upon what is possible for her; and
>
> ...wives contribute *to* the work which men do. Again the character and the scale of these contributions varies significantly with particular jobs.

This thesis examines how the family farm and the farmer's work structures his wife's life, especially in terms of time and work characteristics; and how farm wives contribute to their husbands' work and the family farm since according to Finch:

> ...when a woman marries, she marries not only a man but also she marries his job, and from that point onwards will live out her life in the context of the job which she has married (Finch, 1983: 1).

If women marry farmers, what kind of job are they marrying into? Are farm wives expected to do more than Weitzman's marriage contract suggests? How does the type of farm they come to live on shape and structure their work lives?

In this thesis, I want to consider the implications for women's work of being a *wife* on the family farm. Finch (1983) argues many professions implicitly hire the professional's wife at the same time they hire the 'professional'. For example, she maintains minister's wives, military men's wives and politician's wives are *'married to the job'* — a job they do not apply for and are not paid to do! While farmers are self-employed, rather than hired professionals, are they "hiring" a life-time partner and worker for the farm when they get married?

Irene Murdoch's court case provides evidence that farm women find themselves in a far more complex and demanding marriage contract than Weitzman suggests. Since traditionally family farms did not separate the farm enterprise from the family household, farm wives were not only responsible for the normal domestic responsibilities but also for a wide variety of on farm work (Smith, 1973; Bush, 1982; Delphy and Leonard, 1992). It is through marriage that a farm wife becomes directly or indirectly involved in the success or failure of the farm enterprise. That is, through marriage she becomes directly and indirectly involved in her husband's work. In the Rhodesian context, Kirkwood explains:

> ... because farming was such a precarious occupation and failure and bankruptcy seemed often so close, the farmer and his wife were partners in the enterprise in a very real sense. Frequently ruin was avoided only by the wife's work with poultry,

> dairy and vegetable garden and the immediate cash which this produced (Kirkwood, 1984: 151).

Reimer (1986) and Ghorayshi (1989) both contend the same situation arises in Canadian agriculture — where farm wives are making a valuable albeit often unrecognised contribution to the survival and maintenance of family farms. Moreover, wives' work has been expected as part of the marriage contract, something Irene Murdoch painfully learned[18] when she tried to extract an equal share from the ranch she and her husband had farmed. Murdoch's case suggests when male farmers marry they do essentially 'gain' a life-time partner and a 'voluntary' farm worker,[19] an observation which prompted one farm woman in Canada to say:

> No two men in their right minds would dream of committing themselves to farming together under such an unequal arrangement — much less for a lifetime (Match, 1981:48).

Both Delphy and Leonard (1992) and Finch (1983) agree marriage does not mean husbands and wives experience life equally. It is usually wives whose lives are structured by their husband's work and wives who contribute more to husband's work and leisure than vice versa:

> In considering the suggestion that marriage is an equal partnership and that what wives do for husbands, husbands also do for wives, one is forced to conclude from the limited research on husbands' contributions of their wives' occupations that the evidence does not support the hypothesis of equality....Although marriage is a joint endeavour in the sense that both spouses benefit if their household prospers, and although most husbands do help their wives in various ways, husbands and wives do not get identical benefits if their household 'goes up in the world', nor do they do equal things for each other to achieve this end. Marriage is precisely a gendered and unequal division of labour, with most wives working more hours a day than their husbands in a subordinate role (Delphy and Leonard, 1994: 161).

Dorothy Smith (1979) and Delphy and Leonard (1992) are most concerned with the way husbands appropriate their wives labour as their own. In the end, it was Irene Murdoch's husband who was the direct beneficiary of her labour. Finch (1983), Kanter (1977), Adkins (1995) and the edited collection by Callan and Ardener (1984)

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[18] During the trial Irene Murdoch testified she had been severely beaten (and subsequently hospitalised) by her husband because she refused to release her lien on a piece of ranch property he wanted to sell (Mills *et. al.*, 1975: 443). Tulloch (1985:89) reports this beating left Irene Murdoch's jaw and lip permanently paralysed.

[19] Until changes were made in income tax laws in Canada in 1980 a wife's wages was not permitted as a deductible business expense — even though children could be paid a wage as a legitimate business expense. This obviously meant a wife's labour was expected as an unpaid contribution to the farm's activities, but a child's labour was not (Bruners, 1985).

are more interested in demonstrating how the husband's job and the corporations he works for structure and appropriate the husband's labour and his wife's labour at the same time, so you get what Finch calls 'two for the price of one'. Are farmers really the beneficiaries of their wives' labour or is capitalist agribusiness gaining 'two workers for the price of one' in Canada? What it means to be a wife on a family farm will be explored more fully in Part Two.

C. Getting Down to Work

Women's work was already the focus of much academic research when Irene Murdoch's court case brought farm women to the forefront of public attention. Women had been steadily joining the work force since the Second World War despite various efforts to keep them at home in the 1950s and 1960s. Women's expanding participation in the labour force and the second wave of feminism lead to an increasingly critical examination of women's work and its relation to the larger capitalist economy.[20]

Before the 'domestic labour debate' emerged in the 1970s, 'work' was a fairly straightforward concept referring to the formal economy. Work was exertions of mental or physical effort for which one was paid. The form of payment might be either through wages and salaries from an employer or in the case of self-employment through the sale of the goods or services one's work produced. It was popularly believed men went out to work and women stayed at home. Men had jobs or careers while women had children. Men entered the public realm while women maintained the private realm. Men got paid for working, women did not get paid for looking after their children and family households. Men produced goods, women consumed them. Men worked, women didn't.[21] Feminists challenged these dichotomies — and the fundamental premise that paid work in the formal economy was productive while unpaid work in the household was not.

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[20] For an extensive review of this literature in Canada see Armstrong and Armstrong, 1990.

[21] This position, however, is clearly challenged by much historical research on women and work. See for example, Bradbury, 1992; Hollingsworth and Tyyska, 1988; and Prentice and Trofimenkoff (eds.), 1985.

Some feminists[22] made their major contribution to the debate over work by pointing out the limitations women faced trying to fully participate in all areas of the formal economy on an equal basis with men. They argued women had been excluded from full participation in paid work, and subjected to discrimination and exploitation by men in the work place. They sought women's full and non-discriminatory participation in all sectors of work, equal pay for work of equal value, and an end to 'glass ceilings' blocking women's advancement up the hierarchy of the corporate world and civil service.[23] They insisted women could only achieve equality with men if they had better access to higher education, child care and affirmative action legislation. For these feminists women's liberation would only be achieved through women's participation in the formal economy and political arenas on an equal footing with men.[24]

Other feminists[25] questioned and broadened the definition of what was to be counted as work. They concentrated on the relationship between wage labour outside the home and domestic labour inside the home. Discussions on how necessary women's reproductive labour inside the home is to the capitalist economy followed from applying a feminist critique to Marxism. Women's domestic labour may be outside the formal wage economy but it still contributes to capital accumulation by reproducing the labour force. 'Productive' labour and 'reproductive' labour were not the exclusive categories male academics had portrayed them to be.

Building on this breakthrough, what came to be known as the 'domestic labour debate' turned attention to the connections between women's domestic labour and

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[22] This group of feminists are generally regarded as liberal feminists today because they do not challenge the capitalist economic system and wage labour but seek to improve women's situation within this system.

[23] Even though it seems shocking to our sensibilities today, married women could not be employed by the civil service in New Brunswick until 1967 (Tulloch, 1985: 108). Similarly, Delphy and Leonard (1992: 131) note women in France were not "legally free to work outside the home" until 1965.

[24] Although there are differences in the literature on women's work in Canada and the United Kingdom, these features of women's work are common realities and matters of concern.

[25] This group of feminists can now be referred to as socialist feminists. There was a long and arduous debate during the 1970s between Marxist feminists and Feminist Marxists over which was more fundamental, class or gender systems of exploitation. The now widely accepted socialist feminist synthesis was both gender and class were dimensions of women's oppression. In this scheme, liberation for women can only be achieved by abolishing both patriarchy and capitalism simultaneously.

women's wage labour. The impact of this debate was wide ranging, in Canada, as researchers:

> ...explored the possibilities of Marx's reserve army concept, ... looked at the impact of economic change on women's two related jobs, at the labour process in kinds of work, and at women's participation in unions. These interests overlapped and became increasingly integrated as [those doing theoretical and empirical research] learned from each other, and as women's work in both the private and public sphere changed (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1990: 82).

In effect, the domestic labour debate led sociologists to re-evaluate the ensemble of activities called 'domestic labour' or 'housework'. Scrubbing floors and toilets, laundry, food preparation, shopping, child care and the 'emotional work' of keeping husbands and families functioning under the stress and emotional wear and tear of modern living was finally classified as work. When these tasks were done by servants, domestic workers, or businesses they were clearly understood as work since somebody was getting paid to do them — they were part of the formal economy. However, when these very same activities were done in the 'private sphere' of the home for no pay — they were not part of the formal economy and therefore did not count as work[26]. Feminists argued convincingly women's household labour not only produced things of value to members of the family, but were necessary for the on-going reproduction of society. These activities could not arbitrarily be defined as 'non-work' by virtue of their being unpaid and performed by women in the household. Feminist research made it clear "what women do in the home was to be understood as work, not dismissed as consumption"[27] as earlier work had done (Armstrong and

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[26] Work is clearly not a particular set of activities inherently distinct from non-work. Work certainly involves physical and mental exertions which produce some good, service or performance, but it is clear upon reflection that all such exertions are not universally regarded as work. Those activities which are regarded and identified as 'work' — as opposed to non-work or even leisure — depends on the framework of the observer. In many cases the same activities are regarded both as work and non-work depending on the social identity of the performer or the motivation for the performance. As Pahl (1988: 744) notes: "There is a distinction between work and play but it is not based on the intrinsic nature of the task or activity." Sports, for example, are activities which involve physical and mental exertions and which produce a performance with the ability to entertain both participants and audiences. Some players — for example ice hockey or football players — are regarded as professional athletes, and paid for their efforts. Others may perform the same exertions and provide a performance which entertains an audience and yet these players are regarded as indulging in leisure. Judgements are being made here about the intentions and motivations for performance, and the same activities are regarded in one case as work and as non-work in the other. While it would be wrong to regard these identifications or judgements as the arbitrary actions of an observer, it is clear the social meanings attached to the events or activities by observers is crucial in disputes over what counts as work and what does not. Pahl (1988: 174) argues we can not be certain if activities are work or play until "we know more of the social relations in which the play activity is embedded".

[27] This argument is well illustrated by Delphy and Leonard (1992: 90-91) when they argue if women in urban and rural households are not working (as their omission in economic calculations suggest) we

Armstrong, 1990: 71). Work is work, they argued. An activity does not cease to be socially necessary labour and work by virtue of it being unpaid or done in the home.

Women who worked in the formal economy outside the home while at the same time doing domestic work in the home were said to be working a 'double day'[28]. The 'double day' symbolised the work situation of the modern woman. Implicitly, what happens in the formal economy is more noteworthy: people get paid, they have a net worth, they are productive, they get counted.[29] Raising families continues to be an invisible 'labour of love' — work which remains unpaid and uncounted in the country's Gross National or Gross Domestic Product.[30]

The premise of most theoretical studies on women's work is that tensions persist between the world of work and the family. Women who combine work in the formal economy (*productive* labour) with family responsibilities (*reproductive* labour) feel pressured to have successful careers while at the same time trying to be wives and mothers. Some women opt to *work* in one domain rather than another, others struggle to combine the two.

Studies repeatedly document how women are treated differently than men in the work world — women are consistently paid less, they are pushed into 'female' job ghettos — and they work a 'double day' by working for pay and then coming home to do laundry, clean, cook and look after their husband and children for no pay. Women's work and its many facets have formed the basis of a plethora of research projects. The conclusions have generally been the same: women are being exploited

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must be consuming some rather crude resources since the "accounting stops ... well before the food is edible. The final stages, the cooking, the serving and cleaning up, are excluded. So we must again assume such families have odd eating habits: they eat raw meat directly from the freezer. Similarly, government economists would have us believe urban households eat raw potatoes in greengrocers' shops, for they do not take account of the shopping, storing, cooking, etc., in the GNP" (Delphy and Leonard, 1992: 91).

[28] Especially since studies found women who worked in paid labour still spent 33 hours in housework each week (Grint, 1991: 35). Numerous studies have demonstrated women engaged in a double day simply expanded the number of hours they worked every week.

[29] This point is well made by Marilyn Waring in the National Film Board of Canada film *Who's counting?: Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics* produced in 1994. This is also a theme pursued by Delphy and Leonard (1992: 75-104) throughout their fourth chapter: 'Housework, Household Work and Family Work'.

[30] While many have argued household work and volunteer work should be included in the GDP and GNP, they have not succeeded in having it added. For a lengthy discussion of this issue see Statistics Canada Catalogue 89-532E, August 1994.

and oppressed. However, where the research projects differ is in their analysis of who is exploiting and oppressing women.

Liberal feminists see oppression as a gender issue between men and women as individuals while Marxist feminists identify the capitalist economic system as the culprit. Liberal feminists contend patriarchy and its ideology of male domination results in women being treated unequally. In the 'public' domain of work men control the board rooms and the hiring and firing, and in the 'private' realm of the home women are slaves to their husbands.

Accordingly liberal feminists argue there are two sources of women's oppression: one, male privilege in the work place (i.e. discrimination against women in the formal economy); and two, the primary responsibility of females for the home and domestic labour (i.e. men shirking household responsibilities). With regards to the formal economy, the 'free-market' economic system is not seen as fundamentally exploitative. The problem is women have not had equal access to employment instead they have been confined to gendered and inferior job ghettos and to differential wages for the same work. Therefore liberal feminists stress the need for equal pay for work of equal value, and press for admission into non-traditional jobs (i.e. male privileged employment). To provide women with equality of opportunity, women need access to higher education and training in non-traditional occupations which will provide them with the skills and training to successfully compete with men for employment. Furthermore, employment obstacles such as lack of child care need to be removed so women are not discriminated against in the labour market.

Secondly, the organisation of work in the home (i.e. the gendered division of domestic labour) is oppressive, requiring women to shoulder the burden of household and child rearing whether or not they are also employed outside the home in the formal economy. Men need to take on their share of housework so that women working in the formal economy are not saddled with the double responsibility of all household labour. Humm (1989: 119) writes of liberal feminism:

> ... the roots of women's oppression lie simply in our lack of equal civil rights and educational opportunities.... Liberal feminism argues for individual fulfilment free from the strictures of highly defined sex roles. It limits itself to reformism, seeking to improve the status of women within the system but not fundamentally contesting either the system's operation or its legitimacy. Contemporary liberal feminists espouse women's rights in terms of welfare needs, universal education, and health services.

Radical feminists argue male domination and control of social, political, economic and cultural domains systematically excludes and oppresses women. In other words,

"radical feminism argues that patriarchy is the defining characteristic of our society" (Humm, 1989: 183). Therefore, our male-centred (phallo-centric), patriarchal institutions and society must be eliminated and replaced with women-based alternative institutions. The inequalities of gender have been created and are sustained through sexuality and socialisation; change will only be realised when women take control of their bodies and lives and transform society in the process.

Meanwhile Marxist feminists contended the problem was best understood as one of the many contradictions inherent in capitalism. They reasoned women's domestic labour reproduced the next generation of workers and regenerated men's mental and physical capacity to labour, all at no expense to capital. Women's labour both in the work place and in the home was being appropriated not principally by their husbands but by their own and their husbands' employers. The primary exploiters of women's labour were capitalists while the other men in their lives were only secondary beneficiaries of their labour. To end the exploitation of women, capitalism as an economic system must be transcended in order to eliminate women's subordination both in the work place and the home. Under socialism, men and women will find greater equality:

> ...the achievement of socialism is a first priority and that, while they are not unwelcome, moves to greater equality within a capitalist system can only achieve a limited degree of success because of the way in which the system itself operates (Mallier *et. al.*, 1987: 192).

Humm summarises the Marxist feminist position as follows:

> The aims of Marxist-feminism are: to describe the material basis of women's subjugation, and the relationship between the modes of production and women's status; and to apply theories of women and class to the role of the family (1989: 129).

The socialist feminist paradigm argued that exploitation by capitalism and patriarchy had to be addressed not separately but simultaneously, rather than giving primacy to one source of women's dual exploitation over the other. As Humm explains (1989: 213):

> Unlike radical feminism, socialist feminists refuse to treat economic oppression as secondary; unlike Marxist feminists they refuse to treat sexist oppression as secondary.

Capitalism is an economic system based on the exploitation of working people but further than that it is also a male dominated economic system, which means women are exploited even more than men (in the same class position). Both the economic system of capitalism and the gender division of labour in the home combine to oppress and

exploit women and need to be transformed so women are not treated as second class citizens. Essentially:

> Socialist feminism argues that men have a specific material interest in the domination of women and that men construct a variety of institutional arrangements to perpetuate this domination. Socialist feminism goes beyond the conventional definition of 'economy' to consider activity that does not involve the exchange of money, for example by including the procreative and sexual work done by women in the home. In analysing all forms of productive activity, socialist feminism joins the analytic tool of gender to that of class (Humm, 1989: 213).

In short, socialist feminists believe women must free themselves both from capitalist exploitation and from sexism in order to exist in a more equalitarian society.

Whatever theoretical paradigm they prefer to explain women's work in the public and private spheres, researchers have almost exclusively focused their attention on urban, working women who are working both in paid labour outside the home and in unpaid household labour. This dual work situation has been easily extended to women who own small businesses, because the same bifurcation of the work day applies. All these women were doing a 'double day' of work. Popular women's magazines like *Chatelaine*, *Women's Day* and *Good Housekeeping* ran numerous accounts of exemplary "Super Moms", moms who did everything and had it all — a career and a family. Beside these stories ran advice columns on how to get your better half to carry his share of the housework and child care responsibilities.

One could argue 'the double day' has become 'elevated to an iconic status' for women in the same way Moorhouse argued the auto worker had been "elevated to an iconic status such that labour on the track or line became, somehow, the explicit or implicit model of what most modern work is like or would soon be like" (quoted in Grint, 1991: 11). The debate over women's work has effectively led to a series of conceptual dualisms: paid and unpaid labour, private and public spheres, productive and reproductive work. In spite of this dualism, researchers have tended to centre their inquiries on either the public, paid sphere or the private, unpaid sphere. Book stores are filled with texts reflecting this dualism. On one set of shelves sits books on women's work in the formal economy — either as wage earners, the self-employed or employers — and the issues which surround their employment. Sitting on another set of shelves are the books examining women's household labour past and present. Even though there is widespread recognition that women are working both in the household and formal economy, the relationship between productive work in the paid economy

and reproductive work in the home remains unresolved[31]. The relationship between these two spheres remains particularly problematic for those studying family enterprises where the public world of work and the private realm of the family are not as distinct as the model depicts[32].

Farm wives' work provides such an anomaly[33]. Study after study has documented farm women are involved in farm work activities, off farm employment, domestic labour and community affairs. Since the family farms they live on are household based production sites reliant on family labour, farm wives can not ignore one dimension without compromising the other. The family is economically reliant on the farm, the farm is reliant on the family. The very title, family farm, reflects this entwining of family and work. As we will see, the interweaving of these two theoretically distinct spheres poses challenges for researchers studying farm wives' work.

II: Studying Farm Wives' Work

The rise of feminism was eventually to combine with a growing concern over the fate of 'family farming' to produce a considerable literature on farm women. Ironically, as the number of farm women has declined the scholarly study of them has steadily increased. In fact, research and accompanying literature on farm women has grown exponentially since the 1980s in Canada. Spurred by the Supreme Court of Canada's decision that Irene Murdoch had simply "done the work of any ranch wife and that (her labour) did not create any interest in the lands", the overarching theme of the

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[31] Maroney and Luxton (1997: 90) support this position when they report: "Though one of (the domestic labour debates) main theoretical issues — how to conceptualise economic 'value' of housework in Marxist terms — has faded from view unresolved, understandings of housework developed in these debates are now basic throughout sociology and economics. In spreading this concept, feminist political economy has had its greatest success. For example, most studies of women's paid employment take into account the ways in which domestic responsibilities and labour-force participation interact, as do family law and liberal feminist policy analysts."

[32] Women who work for family enterprises — as shopkeepers, baker's wives or on family farms — find themselves in the similar situation of being both family members and business 'employees' in what is often household based production.

[33] As does the work of other women engaged in household based production or family enterprises where the work sphere and family sphere overlap. Finch's (1983) discussion of minister's wives, Kanter's (1977) discussion of corporate wives, Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame's (1981) study of wives' work in artisan bakeries in France, Callan and Ardener's (1984) edited collection of wives' incorporation into 'the institutional and moral frameworks of their husband's occupations' and Adkins (1995) discussion of bar manager's wives in the hotel and catering industries also illustrate how ineffective the conceptual separation of productive and reproductive, work and family are for understanding wives' work — or perhaps more accurately how such theoretical separations cleverly disguise and render invisible wives' contributions to their husbands' endeavours.

Canadian literature has been farm women's work. The Supreme Court's verdict led to a series of studies on women's direct and indirect contributions to agriculture, the status of rural women, and to major revisions in Canada's matrimonial property and tax laws[34] (Bruners, 1985: 19). These endeavours aimed to redress the 'invisibility' of farm women and their work.

Concomitantly, major upheavals and crises were occurring within Canada's agricultural sector. During the 1970s, farms had mechanised, expanded and capitalised with bank loans. As the costs of inputs continued to grow, proceeds from the farm gate declined. This cost-price squeeze put many farms into financial crisis (see Pugh, 1989, 1991, 1992). Banks foreclosed on farm loans. Many families stopped farming. Their exodus from the land led to extensive research on rural restructuring (Conway, 1981; Sinclair, 1984; Trant, 1986; Winson, 1988; Basran, 1992), the persistence of family farming in industrialised countries (Clement, 1983; Ghorayshi, 1989; Sinclair, 1984) and farm women's changing roles and activities (Abel, 1975; Cebotarev and Shaver, 1982; Cebotarev *et. al.*, 1986; Graff, 1982; Koski, 1982; Willick, 1982).

With their neighbours leaving and the farm community shrinking, farm women organised to make their issues and concerns public (Ireland, 1983; Shortall, 1994; Carbert, 1995; Wiebe, 1995). They began to rally around the need for improved rural services, their legal and economic status, their representation in sectorial decision-making, and their hitherto unrecognised contributions to agriculture (Shaver, 1993). Academics and researchers responded with numerous studies on farm women and their multifaceted roles and work activities. Initially this literature was very descriptive, then it began to draw on Marxist and feminist debates to make sense of farm women's varied work experiences (Berlan Darqué and Gasson, 1991).

To place this research project within the context of these ongoing debates, this section examines both the difficulties encountered when classifying farm wives' work and the rival traditions for explaining farm wives' work. It begins with a discussion of how farm women's work has been treated differently than farm men's work. This differential treatment has led to farm wives' 'invisibility', the need to count their work and explain it — an activity not extended to the male farmer.

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[34] Zwarun is quoted in Bruners (1985: 19) as saying: "The injustice represented by the Murdoch case ignited a fire that burned up the old property laws in province after province". New Brunswick was one of the last Canadian provinces to change its matrimonial property laws doing so on January 1, 1981.

A. Making Farm Wives' Work Count

When we think about family farms, we usually envision men working in fields, driving tractors, fixing machinery, feeding animals and making the decisions. Farmers are men in overalls and rubber boots doing a physically hard day's work. Their wives are busy inside the house: cooking big meals, looking after the children and doing laundry. Sure, farm wives might pinch hit and help out with farm work in times of emergency but conventional wisdom tells us farmers are men, not women.

The literature on farmers focuses on petite-bourgeoisie versus capitalist relations of production, structural changes in the industry, historical trends and changes in agriculture. It is not concerned with whether or not male farmers work. Conversely, the over-riding emphasis in the literature on farm women is focused on establishing whether or not they are working and whether or not this work directly or indirectly contributes to agriculture. Whether we're concentrating on the roles of farm women, their work activities, their multiple and varied contribution to agriculture, their political activism or proving they are farmers in their own right, we are all caught up with validating and highlighting women's participation in agricultural production. Again and again, studies document how women and their labour supports family farming.

This hasn't been the focus of research on male farmers. Male farmers are asked how their work has changed. They recount structural variations in their industry — they are the benchmark for change. But they don't have to prove they are working. Their labour and work tasks are not under scrutiny except in the more recent literature which examines sustainable versus unsustainable agricultural practices (McLaughlin, 1995). Typologies of farmers and their working practices emerge — but even these are discussed and presented as though they pertain to the whole farm and to all those who live and work there. Men's work, the male farmer, reflects what is going on in agriculture[35].

When male farmers are working off the farm to make ends meet, the industry is in crisis — or at least in transition (not proceeding to capitalist production at the rate and speed academics predicted and policy makers promoted). Part-time farming becomes a means for retaining ownership of the land and retaining family farms that are no longer economically viable (Smiley, 1996). When their wives go out to work it is not because

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[35] This assumption is evident in many studies including the work of Newby, Bell, Rose and Saunders (1978 and 1981); Murphy, 1986; and provincial and national government reports (New Brunswick, 1974, 1977, 1988 and Canada, 1981).

they are trying to do the same thing: keep the family farm operating and prospering. Instead they are 'career women' seeking emancipation and equality through their participation in the formal economy (Keating *et. al.*, 1994; Olfert *et. al.*, 1993). Interviewing male farmers results in a body of literature which talks of the demise of the family farm, a loss of a 'way of life', structural changes in agriculture, economies of scale or the need to expand in order to be more competitive. The industry and changes within it are understood as an integral part of farm men's work but this analysis is not extended to farm women's work.

The end result is researchers have not treated women's work the same way as men's work. Men's work has been seen as unproblematic and located in the realm of the formal economy. Men are farmers who produce the commodities sold by the farm. The male farmer's experience is equated with the farm unit. We don't need to prove men are doing farm work. In fact it is assumed men are doing all the farm work.

By contrast, farm women's work has been identified as problematic. The assumption has been men are responsible for the farm and women are responsible for the family household — evidenced in statements like "the barn is his, the house is mine" (Bush, 1982). The goal of much research on farm women has been geared towards proving farm women contribute to agriculture and are working in the farm's commodity production. Hill explains:

> The controversy swirls around the least interesting and most confusing possible question — do women work on their farm? ... The political nature of this question becomes apparent when one realizes that it is never raised about men. Men are farmers simply because they are males living on farms. Women, however, are told that they must prove their labour contributions before they presume to claim either the title of 'farmer' or the right to their property. Yet, how can women — or men — provide such proof? Indeed, what constitutes 'work' on a farm? Defining work on a farm is a conceptual challenge. Answering the telephone, running errands, and waiting for the fuel delivery all constitute work, but this does not seem to be 'real work' in the eyes of agricultural economists who have historically counted only men's labour inputs (Hill, 1981: 373).

This is further compounded when one realises most women are connected to family farm enterprises as wives, mothers and daughters. As wives, mothers and daughters, they are often working alongside their husbands and fathers, sons and brothers without any ownership claims to the farm operation. They are frequently working for no pay. And many of their work activities, like feeding harvesting crews and cleaning milk equipment, which are necessary for the operation of the farm continue to be viewed as household labour, which is itself undervalued. Like reproductive domestic labour, their work occurs out of public view, it does not garner a wage and it does not get counted the same way men's farm work does — as evidenced in the Murdoch

case. Irene Murdoch might have been working hard, doing farm labour, but her work was taken for granted and ignored as the work of a 'normal ranch wife'.

In effect, it was the feminist critiques of rural sociology which made it clear farm women and the role they play in agriculture had been systematically ignored or down played by academics and researchers. Studies in rural sociology and the changing nature of agriculture made little mention of farm women.[36] It was only as farm women became a target for research that it became clear male farmers and farmer's wives did not have the same experiences. Recognising this problem within rural sociology and the existing literature on family farming, a second body of literature emerged looking at women's roles and contributions to agriculture. This literature demonstrated that farm women were doing a lot of work which was not visible or acknowledged by male researchers and rural sociology in general. As Redclift and Whatmore claim "feminist work has placed gender 'on the map' but rural sociology lags behind in implementing these theoretical advances" (1990: 183). As a result, farm wives' work has been unrecognised and rendered invisible, a situation which Ghorayshi (1989: 571) argues presents a misleading view of agriculture.

B. Counting Farm Wives' Work

Despite the growing recognition of farm women's contributions to agriculture, farm women continue to be considered the 'invisible' farmers. Farm women, farm organisations (Koski, 1982; Ireland, 1983) and academics (Cebotarev *et. al.*, 1986; Reimer, 1986) have sought to make these 'invisible farmers' visible[37] by documenting and classifying the kinds of work farm wives do in order that their contributions to family farming and capitalist agriculture may be recognised and counted.

Early investigations relied on extensive surveys and time budget studies to record the day to day activities of farm wives. These studies produced detailed accounts of farm wives' work activities which quickly led to the realisation farm wives were involved in more than a 'double day'. While farm women may have traditionally combined farm work with household labour, they were increasingly working off the

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[36] Howard Newby's (1985) review of "25 Years of Rural Sociology" also failed to discuss the albeit new but growing literature on farm women's roles and contributions to agriculture.

[37] It should, of course, be noted the apparent visibility of men's work and the invisibility of women's work extends beyond the family farm. The whole notion of the public/ private split is predicated on the visibility of men's work in the formal, public economy and women's invisible work in the private family household. Consequently, it is our theories and government policies which have made farm women and their work invisible (Wiebe, 1995).

farm — the result of higher education, the social acceptance of married women in the labour force and economic necessity brought on by the cost-price squeeze. So even though researchers expected to find farm wives engaged in 'productive' and 'reproductive' activities in the farm and household sphere, they learned farm wives were combining household labour, farm work, and professional careers or wage work.

Farm wives were effectively engaged in a *triple day* of labour compared to their urban counterparts double day (Research Action and Education Centre, 1982; Cebotarev *et. al.,* 1986; Ghorayshi, 1989; Graff, 1982; Koski, 1982; Reimer, 1986; Shaver, 1990; Smith, 1987; Willick, 1982). They were working both on the farm in commodity production and off the farm for wages and salaries while taking full responsibility for the reproductive work of child bearing, child rearing and the accompanying household chores[38]. Subsequent research has divided farm wives' work into three basic categories: off farm work, on farm work and domestic work. More recent studies have extended this analysis to include community work and political activism as a fourth category[39] (Shortall, 1994). It should be noted this way of categorising farm women's work uses **spatial location** as the underlying scheme[40].

From the beginning, the research into what farm wives were doing begged the question of what was and what was not to be understood as work. It proved much easier to document what farm women were doing than to reach a consensus on how to define, classify and explain farm women's work. Studies generally accept farm wives'

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[38] Here too the literature has focused on women as mothers rather than on women as wives as Leonard and Delphy point out in their discussion of wives' work. They argue: "Commentary on the family, and in particular feminist writing on the family, has indeed so emphasised the labour women perform 'for children' that at times it has virtually excluded the work they do for other family members and specifically for male heads of households" (Delphy and Leonard, 1992: 226).

[39] Of course, this fourth sphere is applicable to all women and not just farm women — evidence that the 'double day' inadequately represents women who combine work in the formal economy with domestic labour.

[40] Unfortunately some studies believe spatial location is analysis enough in their discussion of farm women's work. For example, Lois Ross (1990) uses spatial location to present her interview data on farm women and their 'business enterprises' in Canada's Prairie provinces. She categorises farm women according to the physical location of their business: from field to storefront, on-farm enterprises, toward community and beyond and cultivating agrarian alternatives. This results in a narrow view of work for each respondent since she emphasises only one aspect of each woman's work activities by dividing women along these spatial lines. In my opinion, the potential of her rich interview data is lost because of this rudimentary analysis.

off farm labour is part of the formal economy and undisputedly 'productive'. Off farm work produces wages and income which are sometimes being used to directly finance farm expenses. At other times, wives' wages and salaries are indirectly supporting the farm by reducing the amount of income the farm has to contribute to family maintenance. In effect, farm wives' off farm labour can directly or indirectly contribute to the farm enterprise.

In terms of on farm work, studies acknowledge women like Barbara and Betty have always been active on their family farms. Women's unpaid farm labour reduces farm business expenses since no one has to be hired and paid to perform the work they do. Women's farm work is wide ranging and can not be easily replaced by wage labour because it seldom has a starting point or ending point, it is flexible and can be made available at a moment's notice (Cebotarev *et. al.*, 1986; Ghorayshi, 1989; Reimer, 1986; Gasson, 1989).

On farm and off farm work tend to be emphasised in research on farm wives' work rather than domestic work (Shaver, 1993; Smith, 1992) and community work. According to Smith (1992) the omission of domestic work is usually justified on the grounds that data on domestic labour is not collected for urban families either. However, this position assumes that the 'domestic' labour sphere is the same for farm women as it is for urban women[41]. Yet several studies have argued farm wives' labour in the domestic sphere goes far beyond 'consumption' and the 'reproductive' labour usually associated with modern households. Farm families have frequently not had the same access to cash as urban families so much of what gets classified as 'reproductive' labour would be better identified as a productive contribution to the farm enterprise (Ghorayshi, 1989; Reimer, 1986). As Reimer notes:

> ... the labour expended on the preparation and maintenance of a vegetable garden, as well as the harvesting and preserving of the results, provides a direct subsidy to the operation of the family labour farm as an economic enterprise. According to our respondents, if her money is saved on the purchase of store-bought foods, it typically goes to the purchase of farm equipment or the payment of credit (Reimer, 1986: 145).

For farm wives, 'domestic labour' means more than cooking, cleaning and child care. Farm wives are extending their household labour to reduce the cash requirements of the family household (Reimer, 1986; Ghorayshi, 1989). They are raising hens and

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[41] Our real error is not recognising the amount of 'productive' labour which occurs within all households whether or not they are urban or rural (Delphy and Leonard 1992: 90-91).

chickens, picking wild berries to make preserves, growing and canning vegetables, baking bread, making butter and yoghurt with excess milk for their family's consumption or cash sales in the informal economy (McKinley-Wright, 1995). If these same goods were produced and bought in the formal market, they would have been created by 'productive' labour rather than by 'reproductive' labour.

Notwithstanding the agreement that all farm women do a lot of work and the general consensus that a typology of farm wives' work must include four general work arenas, there is no consensus over what work activities constitute 'consumption' and which ones 'production'. Most things that are considered reproductive work like child care and cooking are in fact instances of production. The child may consume the child care and a person a meal but caring for the child and preparing the meal are not acts of consumption.

Documenting and classifying farm wives' work into the four spatial categories remains problematic since the theoretical dualisms found in studies of women's work persist within these spatial locations. Formal and informal markets, paid and unpaid, productive and reproductive, work and family, farm and household continue to be applied to farm wives' work. It is these underlying polarities which lead researchers to question what is productive and what is reproductive labour, what is household work and what is farm work in each of the four work spheres. The ongoing discussions of how farm wives directly or indirectly contribute to the farm enterprise or family economy are merely an extension of these bifurcations.

However, as many have pointed out, farm wives do not see their work occurring in separate spheres. Since the family farm household and the farm enterprise are often not only physically, but socially and emotionally inseparable, the distinction between women's productive and reproductive labour, farm work and household work is not as clear for farm wives as the theoretical dualisms imply. Counting and classifying their work is further compounded in that women are often doing more than one thing at a time and their "work seldom has a definite starting time and almost never an ending point" (Cebotarev *et. al.*, 1986: 2). But their work has been and continues to be catalogued within each of the four work spheres according to these opposing characteristics.

Studies have tended to collapse the spatial locations of farm wives' work with the productive or reproductive character of that work. Off farm and on farm are generally considered productive labour while domestic and community work are classified as

reproductive labour (Haney and Knowles, 1988: 7). This is faulty logic since where a work occurs does not determine whether or not it is or isn't productive. For example, doing the farm accounts at the kitchen table has never been labelled reproductive work even though it occurs within the family household. Yet cooking for harvesting crews is often misconstrued as domestic labour, community work (Shortall, 1994) or leisure (Henderson, 1990: 129) because it takes place either in the farm household or at community gatherings. It would be better understood as women's on farm productive work because it is a necessary part of the farm harvest. Since meals — and sometimes board — were part of the pay packet, wives extended household labour reduced the cash costs of commodity production. Bush illustrates the economic importance of this work when she notes:

> [Farm women] cooked for the family and for the hired hands, whose average wage of $45 per month were supplemented by the board she provided. Had women not done this, farmers would surely have had to increase wages, and thus incur increased costs (Bush, 1982: 243).

Obviously more attention needs to be paid to how particular work activities are categorised and understood. As Cooper argues:

> Greater attention to the significance of various chores should help to clarify just how individual family members contribute to the whole farming enterprise (Cooper, 1989: 170).

Farm wives might be doing domestic work, on farm work, off farm work and community work but their labour continues to be understood as productive or reproductive, directly or indirectly contributing to the farm enterprise. I would argue a wives' labour directly supports the family at all times regardless of what sphere it occurs within by providing cash or better farm dividends, a better community, foodstuffs, marketable goods, emotional support and care. Discussions of 'indirect' contributions only serve to highlight and maintain a distinction between the farm and family, formal and nonformal economies. Direct and indirect contributions are quite arbitrary distinctions made by academics in support of *a priori* theoretical categories. I would agree with those who argue farm wives are working to keep both their families and their farms together — all their work activities are directed towards achieving this goal.

C. Accounting for Farm Wives' Work

Once researchers started counting farm women's work, they had to begin to systematically make sense of the work farm women were doing. Figuring out why farm women do the work they do has proven to be much more complex and tangled than establishing what farm women are doing.

Martine Berlan Darqué and Ruth Gasson (1991: 1-2) tried to bring some order to the literature by arguing it has gone through three stages: descriptive, Marxist and feminist. In reality the literature has not moved progressively from description to theory, nor from one theoretical tradition to the next. Leckie (1993: 215) divides the literature into three primary paths. One path provides historical and current accounts of women's participation in agricultural production. A second path highlights the social conditions which shape women's involvement in agricultural production. The third path focuses on the gendered division of labour to be found on family farms. Cooper (1989), Friedland (1991) and Shaver (1993) opt to identify an extensive range of themes to be found in the literature. As one might expect, they identify themes and sub-themes in ways which do not easily map one onto the other.

Despite the varying results, all these reviewers are examining, sorting and trying to make sense of the same literature. If there is one consensus within the literature on farm women, it is that farm women's work must be understood in the context of household based production. From the outset household based production challenges the theoretical distinction between the world of work and the haven of the family home. On the family farm, work and family life are intertwined. Farm women are reproducing their families while maintaining the productive activities of the farm. Activities can not be easily relegated to one sphere or the other. Friedland (1991: 317) contends efforts to understand how production and reproduction articulate themselves in farm women's work has been the central issue of the literature since 1980. Most researchers would concur with Friedland's analysis:

> The family... (farm is a) *production-reproduction unit*, in which one social form, the family cannot be either conceptually or empirically separated from another form, agriculture as a system of social production (Friedland, 1991: 318).

As a result, researchers have sought to articulate two lines of inquiry. One emphasises how the family influences farm wives' work and the other emphasises how farming influences farm wives' work. Within each of these lines of inquiry there is an implicit or explicit reliance on liberal or Marxist thinking. Needless to say, differing understandings of the family and differing understandings of agriculture have exerted considerable influence over the explanations proffered for the varying patterns of farm wives' work.

My review of the literature identifies three dimensions which interweave in the accounts of farm wives' work. One dimension is the area, theme or path of study. A second dimension is the explanatory factor advanced for farm wives' specific work activities or situation. A third dimension is the implicit and explicit theoretical

understandings the researcher brings to bear on the research question. Each of these dimensions will be examined in this section.

i. Areas of Study

Even though many research interests, topics and themes are to be found in the literature on farm women, studies tend to fall within two general research areas. One area of study is farm women's multifaceted work roles and labour processes. The other research area encompasses those studies concerned with farm women's status and political position within the farm family and agricultural community. The two fields are, of course, not mutually exclusive. Some topics and themes — such as, farm women's 'invisibility' and their contributions to agriculture — can be found in both research areas. Nevertheless, researchers tend to accentuate one area of study over the other. Those concerned with women's status and political position tend to emphasise family or social issues (e.g. child care, gender equality, gendered division of labour, community services, power and decision-making etc.) while those interested in women's work emphasise farm or economic issues (e.g. commodity production, farm size, scale of production, capitalist relations of production, rise of agribusiness, whether or not the farm is labour or capital intensive etc.) (Wiebe, 1995: 159).

Researchers studying farm women's work have been concerned with making farm women's labour visible. Some engaged in time budget studies (Cebotarev *et. al.*, 1986), others conducted extensive surveys (Buchanan *et. al.*, 1981; Koski, 1982; Ireland, 1983; Rosenfeld, 1985; Evans and Ilbery, 1996) and many pursued in-depth interviews (Reimer, 1986; Ghorayshi, 1989; Pearson, 1979; Ross, 1990; Alton, 1995b; McKinley-Wright, 1995) in their efforts to determine how farm women contributed to agricultural production. Some researchers, of course, combined these methods (Whatmore, 1991a) while others focused exclusively on secondary statistical data (Smith, 1986, 1987, 1992).

These studies resulted in extensive discussions of what roles farm women play in agricultural production. Ideal types representative of farm women's different degrees of involvement in agricultural production were developed. Ruth Gasson and Andrew Errington provide a comprehensive review of this literature in their book *The Farm Family Business* (1993: 169-173)[42]. The Canadian literature on farm women has been

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[42] Pamela Smith (1987: 196-200) also reviews this literature. Specifically Smith reviews the work of Boulding, 1979; Pearson, 1979; Lodwick and Fassinger, 1985; and Kohl, 1976 while Gasson and Errington review the work of Pearson, 1979; Craig (no date); Gasson, 1980 and Symes, 1991.

less concerned with ideal types of farm women's roles. Here the emphasis has been on building typologies of farm women's work activities. As we discussed in the last section, this has led to an understanding that farm women are engaged in a triple day of work. Some have emphasised the manual labour and management activities women do on farms while others have focused on the off farm employment practices, pluriactivity and diversity in farm women's work. The literature has been plagued with ongoing discussions of women's direct and indirect contributions to agriculture.

The second research area is primarily interested with farm women's status and position within the family farm and agricultural community[43]. Many have studied farm women's work as an indicator of their status in the family and community (Alston, 1995; Delphy and Leonard, 1985, 1992; Gasson, 1980, 1981, 1984; Whatmore, 1991a). This is why few reviewers divide the literature in the way I have. Rather than studying work activities *per se*, this literature highlights the gendered division of labour, property ownership, inheritance, power and decision-making. These studies are interested in how gender inequities in work, resource allocation and family and sectorial decision-making play themselves out on the family farm, frequently to the detriment of women. They argue male farmers have been the beneficiaries of their wives' and children's labour at the cost of farm women. Farm women's work load, their 'invisibility' and their unrecognised contributions to agriculture are understood to be the result of long term patriarchal practices.

These studies emphasise the need for women's equality with men in all their political, social and economic interactions. They argue women need equal access to credit, training programs, child care, health and safety programs and new government tax regulations for greater equality on the farm. In Canada, this work has been successful in improving farm women's legal status and access to training, health and safety programs (Bruners, 1985; Boivin, 1987; Busque, 1987). Nevertheless, this thesis is interested in how farm women's work activities and labour processes, not their status and social position, are shaped and influenced by 'family' farming, the farm's commodity production and the changing farm community.

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[43] Sachs (1983: xi) advised researchers to study the position of women on farms in terms "both of the economic forces operating upon the structure of agriculture in particular and of the position of women in society at large". But my assessment is many researchers are primarily interested in farm women's status and position more than how their work activities and options are organised and structured by agriculture and the broader political economy.

ii. Explaining Farm Wives' Work Patterns

Whatever one's primary focus of study, efforts to systematically account for farm women's roles in agriculture, their work activities and differing status and position have evolved around three explanations:

1. Patriarchy has resulted in agriculture being male dominated. Men control land, labour and capital which gives them power to make decisions and appropriate women's labour. Farm families vary in the degree to which women have gained access to power, decision-making and control over resources;

2. "Socio-personal" characteristics like age, education, and different stages of the family life cycle account for the variations in work activities and roles. An extension of this is to compare and contrast the interaction between the family life cycle and the farm business cycle; or

3. The structural transformation of agriculture has shifted family farming into subservient positions to agribusiness and the resulting cost-price squeeze forces families to adopt different survival strategies which in turn result in the exploitation of all family members including women. The pattern of women's work reflects these changing survival strategies.

The explanation favoured depends upon whether or not the investigator views differences among farm wives as a consequence of male domination and patriarchy, differences between women themselves or as a result of the capitalist economic system or some combination thereof. This thesis is primarily concerned with how farming and the structural transformation of agriculture shape and influence farm wives' work.

Haney and Knowles (1988: 7) purport it is the intersection of characteristics from the farm, the family and the women themselves which influence farm women's options and shapes their economic roles and activities. Peggy Ross (1985: 20) concurs differences in farm women's productive activities can be traced to: variations in their individual and family characteristics; and the economic and political conditions affecting agricultural production systems.

While socio-personal characteristics no doubt play a role in farm wives' work activities it would be erroneous to examine them in isolation from the family farm enterprise. To this end, others have focused on the way changing social relations of production (which are ascribed to various things from the modernisation of agriculture to the rise of agribusiness and the cost-price squeeze) have affected farm women's

roles and work activities. This research has been very concerned with social change and the interaction between the wider agricultural community and the individual family farm. Yet as Leckie points out, even here, there is no agreement over what structural characteristics have the most impact on farm women and the family farm:

> While there is general agreement that there are structural variations both in the level of involvement of farm women in family farms, and in the kinds of tasks they take on, there is no consensus as to which structural factors significantly affect the role of women, nor to what extent. Differences in individual farms, combined with changing economic contexts for specific commodities, necessitate different family farming strategies, some of which may give farm women greater scope than others (Leckie, 1993: 215).

What is overlooked in this discussion is the underlying ideologies and assumptions researchers bring to their research projects. There is no agreement over what 'structural factors significantly affect the role of women, nor to what extent' because more than one theoretical paradigm is in use. Yet, none of the literature reviews I have perused make note of the different feminisms — nor their reliance on liberal or Marxist ideologies — and the consequences of such divisions for reaching a consensus or theory building. At best authors outline their own working theories, but all too frequently conclude they are using 'feminist' theory, completely ignoring or overlooking the divisions within feminism. As a result, most authors writing on farm women's roles in agriculture proceed without identifying which feminist theoretical explanations they are implicitly employing.

iii. Underlying Ideologies

Shaver's (1993: 1) examination of research on farm women in Canadian agriculture suggests that less than one-fifth of all research is "theoretically oriented". But if the research goes beyond mere description, the authors are most certainly employing some theoretical model to explain the social phenomena they are witnessing. Even descriptive work can be argued to have an implicit theoretical orientation.

Even though many authors make declarations of being 'feminists', this does not mean they have a single theoretical orientation. The different varieties of feminism are alive and well in the farm women's literature. Yet researchers seldom acknowledge the ideological roots of their ideas and concepts, preferring to be silent about how they're drawing, sometimes haphazardly, upon liberal and Marxist traditions. These underlying ideological differences produce different questions and frames of reference for researchers — even though they are looking at and studying the same phenomena. Liberal feminists will rely on liberal economic concepts such as modernisation, the primacy of market relations, the effects of market forces and economies of scale in

their analyses and discussions of farm women's work. On the other hand, researchers employing concepts drawn from Marxist debates focus on petty commodity production, capitalist production, the concentration and centralisation of capital in agriculture, the rise of agribusiness and the subordination of farmers to corporate control.

Research which follows a liberal feminist paradigm does not question the agribusiness system or the situation farm women find themselves in. They tend to be very descriptive — describing farm women or their work activities without placing them into the wider social, economic and political arena. A good example of this is Pamela Smith's (1992) article, *"Beyond 'add women and stir'"*, where she looks at different trends in farm women's off farm employment observing that farm women are no longer working as nurses and teachers without considering the extensive cutbacks in teaching and nursing jobs, the closing of rural hospitals and the regionalisation of schools. All the changes she points out in farm women's work situation but for which she presents no context can be easily explained by looking at the general economic trends in the areas of Canada she describes. Farm women are no longer working off the farm as nurses and teachers because these jobs are no longer available in the rural communities where farm women live: to continue in these professions requires extensive travel time and increased costs for farm women.

Recognising the higher costs farm women face if they want to continue working in the formal economy, a second tendency within the liberal feminist paradigm is to argue farm women lack an equality of opportunity in the formal economy of employment which leads to them experiencing an inequality of condition. Here the norm or standard to be followed is the 'successful' urban woman, who has both a career and a family. The prescription which follows is for farm women to escape the farm by seeking off farm employment, get better training and not be discriminated against in the formal economy because of higher employment costs and so on. In their advancement of this position, Olfert *et. al.* (1992) argue the 'rational alternative' to the oppressive situation of farm life is to increase mechanisation on the farm and have farm women seek more lucrative off farm employment. To achieve this, costs barriers need to be reduced or eliminated so rural farm women can compete on an equal footing with urban women for these employment opportunities. Olfert *et. al.* clearly follow

within the liberal feminist tradition in that they seek an equal playing field: in this case not between men and women but between urban women and farm women.[44]

A third issue for liberal feminists studying farm women is their legal status and rights. Irene Murdoch's court case made it all too clear farm women and farm men did not have an equal share to farm property (Bruners, 1985; Boivin, 1987). The predominant liberal analysis was farm women (and all women) were being exploited because they did not own property. If farm women were joint owners in family property (i.e. the family farm), they would be more equal to their husbands and experience less subordination in family and farm affairs. Feminists were in fact successful in their lobby to alter the matrimonial property laws in the late 1970s, but the situation of farm women has not improved as dramatically as they would have expected.

Why? Others sought to explain farm women's situation in terms of ongoing changes in the agricultural industry. In terms of changes in the agricultural industry, liberal feminists emphasise the interaction between the family life cycle and the farm business cycle; the educational levels, business acumen and entrepreneurship of family members; as well as the impact of specialisation and mechanisation on family farms. Following this approach, Keating and Munro write:

> ...we must not only document women's input to the farming system but examine that input within the context of farm business cycles, farm family cycles, and historical changes in the structure of agriculture (1988: 156).

Marxist or socialist feminists have also made efforts to explain farm women's work in terms of ongoing changes in the agricultural industry. Their underlying ideological perspective leads them to consider the articulation of productive and reproductive labour, internal and external relations of production, and the farm's social relations of production. They have focused on petit-bourgeois production units versus capitalist production units with the most common variable for differentiation being the extent to which farm operations employ wage labour. Studies which concentrate on wage labour must be careful not to ignore or downplay the labour contributions of women (and children) to the farm enterprise. 'Family farms' can not be treated as if they are single, homogeneous units. As many authors have pointed out there is a need to both

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[44] It should not be overlooked that studies of the formal economy have overwhelming concluded women are paid less than men, they are stuck in job ghettos and hit glass ceilings (for a review of this research in Canada see Armstrong and Armstrong, 1990: 57-66) — all issues which rural farm women will face in their participation in the labour market.

recognise and theorise about the internal social relations of production (Delphy and Leonard, 1985, 1992; Ghorayshi, 1989; Whatmore, 1990) within "household production units", of which the family farm is an archetype. As Reimer (1986: 144) argues in relation to the structural transformation of agriculture literature:

> Their concern with the transformation of the independent commodity producer to proletarian has maintained the distinction between paid and unpaid labour because the critical indicator of this transformation has been the extent of paid labour on the farm. In the process, women's work, being largely nonpaid, has been relegated to the "nonproductive" and "domestic" spheres.

Many employing a Marxist feminist or a socialist feminist analysis see the capitalist economic system as the means by which both men's and women's labour are appropriated by agribusiness. In other words, it is the food processor and the agribusiness system who benefit from farm women's work rather than the farm husband per se. In fact the cost of reproducing the farm enterprise and the family household gets spread to the whole family rather than falling on the male farmer or male head of household. Husbands may be appropriating their wives' labour but food processing companies are appropriating the whole family's labour — so all family members end up as losers in this scheme.

One way of understanding this is that the cost of reproducing the farm enterprise and the family household gets spread to the whole family rather than falling on the male farmer or male head of household. Women and children contribute unpaid labour without which the farm enterprise could not survive given the vicious cost-price squeeze. A passage from Mallier *et. al.* (1987: 191-192) provides insight into this argument:

> Marx (1970, vol. 1, p. 395) suggests that if an employer was paying a male worker enough for the subsistence of his whole family, it would be worth his while also to bring the worker's wife and children into the labour force. The subsistence wage could then be shared among them. For the same total wage payment an employer would get the labour of all the members of the family able to work instead of just one member, which could temporarily allow profits to be maintained or increased.

In other words, it is to capital's advantage to exploit the whole family; and since family farms are one of the last residuals where labour is organised by the household, farm families certainly experience this exploitation.

The disputes between liberal feminists and socialist feminists are not simply confined to academics. Nettie Wiebe (1995) illustrates the far reaching impact these varying perspectives have had on farm women's organisations in Canada. She

explains how competition for funds has highlighted more fundamental ideological differences:

> The Canadian Farm Women's Network, which emerged out of the conference, is at best a liberal-feminist organisation with no public admission of feminism at all. It continues to be committed to gaining 'recognition' for farm women and entry into the current decision-making structures in agriculture by raising the profile of farm women. In contrast, the women of the National Farmers Union lean more towards socialist feminism, challenging the structures within which agricultural decisions are made as well as the male domination of the industry as a whole, from the farmstead to the ministry (Wiebe, 1995: 157).

Wiebe herself favours a synthesis of liberal and socialist feminism under the umbrella of 'agrarian feminism'. She defines agrarian feminism as a feminism which includes both 'equal rights' and 'social' feminism[45] (Wiebe: 1995: 137).

While liberal feminism and socialist feminism have been frequently employed to understand and explain farm women's work, radical feminism has not appeared as consistently in these analyses — no doubt in part because radical feminism has tended to reject the 'traditional' family and heterosexuality, both of which can be found at the heart of most family farms. In her recent article, Shortall describes the ambiguous relationship farm wives have had with 'feminism' and the women's movement:

> Feminist frameworks are unable to accommodate the multi-faceted nature of farm women's lives. This may well be the reason why farm women eschew feminism. The editorial in the OFWN [Ontario Farm Women's Network] newsletter clearly outlines some of the barriers to participation faced by women, as women in agriculture. Parallel with this discussion, the same editorial states: If women are successful in attaining high-powered positions, one of their responsibilities should be to support other women and 'women's issues', a term I hate to use. There are no 'women's issues', they should be called 'family issues', or better yet 'society's issues' (OFWN, 3, 4, 1991:2) It seems farm women are aware of farm women's issues, but this is only one item on their agenda. Feminism denies recognition of the other items (Shortall, 1994: 284).

However narrow this view of feminism is, the relationship between feminism (both as an organised political force and an intellectual tradition) and farm women is complicated by the fact that farm *wives* place a strong focus on the traditional nuclear family and its place in farming. Farm wives are not simply exhibiting conservative views. Like liberal feminists, they are interested in less highly defined sex roles and better access to education, leadership positions and financial credit so that they can be equal partners with their husbands in the family farm enterprise. But unlike liberal feminists they identify the political-economic system in which farming is situated as

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[45] Yet it is not clear how these two positions are reconciled in her definition or adoption of the term 'agrarian feminism'.

problematic. Their equality with men can not come at the expense of the family farm. Farm wives are not a receptive audience for radical feminism's hostility towards men since that would fracture the very nature of the family farm.[46]

Farm wives' life situation is such that they are quite reasonably concerned to strengthen the 'traditional' family since the family enterprise is the economic relationship upon which they depend. In terms of being a wife, Stacey (1986: 214) accurately points out that "a wife cannot resign from her work without breaking from her husband and children, nor can she leave her husband without losing her job". This is especially true for farm wives. Farm wives leave not only their homes but often their livelihoods as well if they are separated or divorced from their husbands. While feminism highlights the conflict between men and women, farm wives are concerned with uniting the family and farm enterprise. The following excerpt highlights this point:

> There is no doubt that farm women do have a unique relationship with their families....The family system and the farm system are integrated, and women's productive and reproductive work cannot be neatly separated without losing the holistic reality of farm families, family farms and their location in a world system (Elbert, 1991 quoted in Shortall, 1994: 284).

Since the family farm is a form of household production which uses family labour, if the farm enterprise fails the family household loses its economic base and economic security. Everything that has been invested in the farm enterprise and all the sacrifices made in the family household will be lost. Farm women are therefore found pushing 'farm issues' as much if not more than what urban feminists would consider 'women's issues' (Shortall, 1994). Basically farm wives are intent to resolve the 'women's issues' that affect the farm and the well-being of the farm family. As Shortall indicates:

> ... the argument that farm women's groups are feminist groups is complicated by their determined efforts to save the family farm and the farming industry, which in many respects is the source of their unequal position (Shortall, 1994: 283).

Wiebe points out the difficulties for activists when farm women's concerns are divided into the separate baskets of 'women's issues' and 'real farm issues':

> There is a good deal of tension between the view that so-called "women's issues" are less important than the "real farm issues" (product marketing, commodity production, and pricing) and the contention that women have no choice but to work

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[46] After all, except for female children and the few instances of single women or lesbian couples as farm operators, women in farming are *wives* or widows (Smith, 1987: 142-143).

> on women's issues such as child care, gender equality, and community services. The women who adopt the prevailing evaluation that places women's concerns, the so-called "social issues," secondary to the economic issues object that to deal with women's issues will leave them out of the important decisions in agriculture. Attempts to resolve this conflict often include the argument that there really are no "women's issues" per se, only family issues (Wiebe, 1995: 159).

Interestingly, this separation has also plagued the literature on farm women's work. Researchers have been overwhelmingly concerned with how 'women's issues', 'social issues' and 'family issues' affect farm women's work rather than how the substance of 'real farm issues' — product marketing, commodity production and pricing — affect farm women's work. It is these more neglected 'farm issues' which are the central concern of this thesis.

D. Taking Farming Into Account

Resoundingly researchers have argued farm wives make extensive and varied contributions to farming which until recent decades have gone unnoticed. These 'invisible' farmers have not only been taking primary responsibility for the family farm household but they have also been regularly participating in farm production. Farm women are found to be engaged in such a wide range of agricultural tasks that every possible aspect of farming has been reported to be done by some farm woman at some time and place (Rosenfeld, 1985; Friedland, 1991; Rickson, 1997). The difficulty researchers have faced is ascertaining why such a comprehensive and varied range of work activities are present among farm women in a similar time and place. As we already noted, researchers have attributed the spectrum in farm women's work to: socio-personal differences between the women themselves, the patriarchal world in which they (and we) live, structural changes in agriculture or some combination thereof depending upon whether or not researchers give precedence to personal, family or farm characteristics. A range of features within each of these three dimensions have been examined as scholars attempt to make sense of farm wives' variegated work.

When farming is discussed, it is broad universal characteristics like scales of production, levels of mechanisation, degrees of capital investment and social relations of production which are used to account for the differences in farm women's work. What a farm produces and how that production is organised has largely been neglected by those studying farm women's work. Yet the commodity a farm produces establishes the work which needs to be done and the broader social and economic conditions under which the work will get done. In effect, commodity is the feature of farming which determines the job the farmer and his family have set out to do.

Cornelia Butler Flora (1981) appears to be the first person to call for a more thorough examination of the effects of commodity on farm women's work. She believed commodity and class were the two factors which would best explain the differences in women's inputs to farming. She wrote:

> I would like to suggest a research agenda that could both broaden and specify an analysis of what is happening with farm women. ... such research should analyze differences in the input of farm women to the farming system according to commodity and the class position of the household (Flora, 1981: 382).

She hypothesised women's participation in farming, in terms of labour and management, would be smaller on farms where workloads were more or less evenly distributed throughout the year. Her hypothesis is built on the notion women are a 'reserve army of labour' who can be called on to contribute to farming during peak or busy periods of the year. Such an approach implicitly perceives women as 'helpers' who fill in when necessary rather than as regular contributors to farm production. However, as we will see in Part Two, farm wives are more than 'sometime' helpers. What is more, women on dairy farms which require a steady supply of labour are not doing less than women on potato farms where work is more seasonal — they are just doing different work. In addition, we will learn in Chapter Four, farm wives habitually contribute to farming through peripheral activities, back-up services and as additional workers (Finch, 1983) on the family farm.

In Canada, Gisele Ireland (1983) was the first person to take up Flora's suggestion to take commodity seriously. Remarkably, her work continues to be one of the most comprehensive discussions of commodity to be found today. She begins her discussion of farm women's work by arguing when a woman marries a farmer her life and work will be shaped by the kind of farm she finds herself living on. Ireland then proceeds to concretely outline the different work requirements, work schedules and marketing arrangements of the commodities in her study. She explicitly argues a farm wife's work will differ as a consequence of the commodity or mix of commodities being produced on the farm. For example, she notes:

> The wives of dairy farmers are guaranteed chores twice a day all year. Cows must be milked on a rigid schedule in order to produce the maximum amount of milk per cow. ... Most dairy farmers' wives are active in the farm operation. These wives do have the security of guaranteed prices which makes budgeting easier from one year to the next. However, a dairy farm is highly labour intensive and all other activities must be scheduled around the daily milkings (Ireland, 1983: 18-19).

Unfortunately, Ireland fails to carry through with this dimension of farming when she computes her survey data, i.e. she does not use commodity as an independent variable. She identifies the number of women on particular farms but it is unclear to

what extent commodity affects their overall work activities. Instead of establishing the pattern of work women have in particular commodity sectors, Ireland studies their work patterns along the more conventional lines of spatial work locations and personal, family and farm characteristics. Inexplicably, she relegates commodity to a part of the background noise even though she begins by identifying and recognising it as an important feature for shaping and influencing the work farm wives do.

A few years later, Pamela Smith (1987) did make commodity an independent variable to analyse women's off farm and on farm work. Using unpublished Statistics Canada data, Smith considered whether the amount of time women spent in off farm and on farm work differed from one commodity to the next. She found farm women's work did in fact vary with commodity. Overall, less off farm work was to be found on dairy farms than in any other commodity sector. When a spouse worked off the farm in dairy operations, it was most likely to be the farmer's wife; however, only twenty per cent of all dairy operations in Canada reported off farm employment in 1981. She speculates it is the supply-managed and subsidised marketing arrangements of dairy farming which enables farm families to operate their farms without supplementary off farm income. She further suggests the labour intensive nature of dairy farming makes it difficult for members of farm families to pursue off farm work. In fact, she found wives on dairy farms were more involved in farm production than wives in other commodity sectors; and they were responsible for working one-third of all the hours farm wives contributed to agricultural production annually. She concluded:

> The findings suggest that commodity type does influence whether women work, and the amount of work they do on farms. Specifically, wives of dairy farm operators work a greater proportion of the hours contributed by spouses directly involved in agriculture, whereas spouses of wheat and small grain farm operators contribute fewer hours on an annual basis. It would be useful to investigate which factors contribute to the difference in the amount of work done by spouses on the two types of farms (Smith, 1987: 172).

To my knowledge, nobody has taken on the task of comparing farm women's work across these two commodities.

In their study of the mid-1980s farm crisis in the Midwestern United States, Lobao and Meyer (1995) did single out dairy and grain farming. Their goal, however, was not to compare women's work in these two commodity sectors but to investigate the gendered division of labour within family households and to ascertain whether or not the gendered division of labour changed as each of these industries changed. They explain:

> Farming is ... an industry where the division of labour historically has revolved around gender. It provides an opportunity to examine whether traditional divisions of labor relaxed during crisis (Lobao and Meyer, 1995: 576).

According to them, individual farm enterprises did not experience the agricultural crisis uniformly because "the crisis varied across region, enterprise size, and commodity specialisation" (1995: 578). They did find women on dairy farms do more on farm work than women on cash grain farms (1995: 592). But since their primary concern was to study the gendered division of labour within dairy farming and within grain farming, the farm's commodity production became one dependent variable among many in 'the farm enterprise structure' to be studied. Their results indicated the agricultural crisis within each of these industries did not produce a marked difference between men and women's work. The same gendered division of labour persisted on dairy and grain farms during and after the crisis as existed before.

Padavic (1993) also looked at the impact of agricultural restructuring but rather than ask whether or not it affects the gendered division of labour, she considered the impact of agricultural industrialisation on women agricultural workers. Her research provides the most evidence to date on how specific commodities and the political economy within which production is embedded create the social, economic and political conditions under which farm women will work. She examined four commodities in four different regions of the United States and found 'farm women' were doing different things in each of these places:

> The forces that pushed toward globalization, mass production, and standardization of production practices had variable impacts on women's labor force participation. These forces could cause women's participation in the agricultural labor force to increase or decrease, depending on the way agricultural commodities are produced at the local level (Padavic, 1993: 228-229).

Margaret Alston (1995a/b) studied women's work on family farms in two geographically, economically and socially distinct agricultural regions of Australia. She found "women's involvement on the farm and the way they balanced their tasks varied" (1995b: 525). But while she recognised commodity as a distinguishing feature of the farm regions she was studying — cereal cropping dominated one area and mixed grazing the other — Alston did not consider commodity to be a key factor for understanding differences in farm women's work. Unfortunately, she also fails to present her research findings consistently. At points she compares women's work in the two regions and at other moments she amalgamates the two regions in her data presentation. In the end, we are left with an unclear picture of how the features of the particular regions played themselves out in farm women's spatial work locations.

A number of researchers have diverted such a problem by concentrating on one commodity sector in their study of farm women's work (Keating and Munro, 1988; Ghorayshi, 1989; Machum, 1992; Keating and Little, 1994; Wall, 1994). For example, Keating and Munro studied how age affected women's work on grain farms. They contended it was necessary to restrict their study to one commodity — grain — because women's work would vary from one commodity to the next:

> Other types of farm operations such as dairy were excluded from the study since it was expected that patterns of work might differ substantially (Keating and Munro, 1988: 160).

Ghorayshi (1989) echoed their argument even though her study was broader in scope. She investigated the nature of wives' involvement in dairy farming in order to determine their role in the production and reproduction of the family farm. She argued:

> Concentration on one type of production was essential for bringing out the complexity of women's work in the farm enterprise (Ghorayshi, 1989: 587).

My own work (Machum, 1992) sought to establish whether or not, and if so how, farm women's work changed as the agricultural industry changed. Focusing on one commodity — potatoes — enabled me to trace the transformation of one industry and to confirm women's work had indeed changed as the industry changed. Not to confine my research to one commodity would have left the mammoth task, which Padavic did undertake in her study, of sorting out extensive changes in various industries and ascertaining whether or not, and if so how, they related to subsequent changes in farm women's work. Limiting research to one commodity sector does permit a more in-depth analysis of other factors since the farms are at least in principal producing the same output and operating within the same social, political and economic framework. For example, Wall (1994) researched the working conditions of hired farm workers in the tomato industry in Ontario. By limiting her study to one industry in one province she could examine the effects of the changing economic and political circumstances on the gendered division of labour among immigrant workers. All of these studies which controlled for commodity indicated farm women's work within a commodity sector is not uniform even though they are participating in the production of the same product.

William Friedland (1991) emphasises this point. He points out there is no single labour process for producing the same agricultural product much less different ones; which means women's work is likely to vary both within commodity sectors as well as between them. Friedland notes:

> (1) *Within* the labor process of agriculture, taken as a whole, the location and/or focus of women's contributions is variant.

> (2) The focus of women's contributions between commodity systems is variant (Friedland, 1991: 322).

In fact, Friedland renews Flora's call for researchers to study the impact a farm's commodity production has on farm women's work because such work "is still very much in its infancy" (1991: 322).

Unfortunately, while many researchers may recognise growing potatoes requires a different labour process than producing milk, they find it sufficient to simply add commodity to their long list of factors affecting farm women's work (Haney and Knowles, 1987: 7; Gasson, 1989: 12; Shaver, 1991: 40; Gasson and Errington, 1993: 155; Olfert *et. al.*, 1993: 87; Leckie, 1993: 182; Rickson, 1997: 95). Rickson (1995: 95) provides a current example of this genre:

> Women's participation in agricultural production varies by individual demographic factors such as age, ethnicity and class as well as by factors of agricultural structures and production-related variables such as region, crop, industrial labor demands, and product price variation. Household/farm status, whether the land is free-hold or leasehold, whether the farm is owned or leased, and site-specific constraints also affect women's (and men's) work.

The list of features affecting farm women's work has become so capacious it is hard to sort out what characteristics have the most impact on farm wives' work.

One way out of this morass is to shift the question. Instead of asking: 'How do women contribute to farming?', we should ask: 'How does farming contribute to women's work?' Finch (1983) in fact began her analysis of wives' work by considering: *How Men's Work Structures their Wives' Lives.* Secondly she examined: *Wives' Contributions to their Husbands' Work.* Interestingly Delphy and Leonard (1992) ask the same questions but in the reverse order. More commonly researchers studying farm women's work engage Finch's second question and completely neglect her first one — which is why they fail to consider 'how farming structures farm women's work'. Asking this obverse question provides a new way of looking at the same situation. It effectively switches the emphasis from women and 'women's issues' to farming and 'farm issues' (Wiebe, 1995).

III: The New Brunswick Case Study

Even though one of the most important distinctions amongst farm enterprises is the commodity they produce for sale, almost all research on farm women has either overlooked or only given cursory attention to this difference. It is the intention of this case study to more closely examine whether or not, and if so how, commodity affects the work activities of farm wives.

Since no researchers have systematically studied the impact of commodity on farm women's work, this research is exploratory in nature. As such, the project utilises a comparative case study design to look at the similarities and differences which emerge in farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. The strengths and weaknesses of the comparative case study design and the particulars of this exploratory study are more fully described in Appendix A.

I chose Canada's East Coast province of New Brunswick as my research site because its two major farm commodities — dairy and potato — are strikingly different. Potato production here is an intense and seasonal process, involving the planting, tending and harvesting of a field crop. Dairy farms are all-year operations involving animal husbandry and milk collection on a daily schedule. Potatoes are sold in 'open', uncertain markets dominated by one or more large multinational food processors, usually under contracts which bind the farm enterprise tightly to the networks of the multinational. By contrast, milk is sold in a 'closed' market protected and regulated by the provincial Milk Marketing Board. The Milk Marketing Board establishes and monitors quotas for each farm enterprise and negotiates the price received at the farm gate from milk processors. At the same time, both potato and dairy farming play a major role in New Brunswick agriculture and are quite comparable: the two commodities rank first and second for all farm cash receipts in the province, they both have high overhead costs and have both seen major technological advancements in the past few decades. Being able to focus on one province was also important for simplifying the study of policies which have governed family farm enterprises over time.[47]

These highly contrasting differences make them an ideal starting place to explore the impact of commodity on farm wives' work. Comparing farm wives' work activities across such highly contrasting commodity sectors permits an exploration of how this dimension of farming impacts on farm wives' work. Given the different social, economic and political realities potato and dairy farms face, we should be able to determine whether or not the kind of work demanded of women in the household, on the farm, off the farm and in the community varies from one commodity to the next.

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[47] Since agriculture is a joint federal and provincial responsibility in Canada policies often vary from province to province in a way they would not in a more centralised political system. Padavic (1993) shows the impact of varying jurisdictions and policies on farm women's work in the United States.

The second part of this thesis reports the findings of this exploratory case study of farm wives' work on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. It provides an intensive and rich look at the work of thirty farm wives living on farms which produce either milk or potatoes. It documents the influences 'family' farming, the farm's commodity and the changing farm community have had on these women's work patterns. It is intended as a starting point for broader study of these influences on farm wives' work — particularly the commodity the farm produces — and aims to raise questions to be tested in more extensive and general studies of farm women.

The case study's primary method of inquiry was the semi-structured interview[48]. Sixteen women from dairy farms, twelve women from potato farms and two women from farms which produced both commodities were interviewed. To enable the reader to easily establish what commodity group each woman belongs to I have given the women pseudonym names[49] reflecting their commodity group: all the women whose names begin with the letter D are connected to dairy farms, those beginning with the letter P are connected to potato farms and Betty and Barbara are engaged in both commodities.

Each interview lasted from two to six hours and established the women's work and farm histories. Interviews were conducted from November 1995 to September 1996 in the interviewees' farm homesteads across rural New Brunswick.[50] Many women also took me on farm tours once the interview was completed. During the interview, farm wives talked to me about their work on and off the farm, their educational and family backgrounds, and their current family and work situation. In addition to these interviews, the thesis examines statistical data from Statistics Canada and archival material from relevant Royal Commissions in New Brunswick concerning the farm industry where these sources were available and threw light on farm wives' work.

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[48] A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

[49] Each women agreed to be interviewed on the basis of anonymity — and many times this was a prerequisite for the interview. As Pearl said, "Our neighbours are our competitors". Therefore identifying characteristics have been altered or omitted to respect the identity of respondents. The information, however, has not been altered insofar as it would change the analysis. For a copy of the interview consent form see Appendix B.

[50] With one exception, Delia was interviewed over two afternoons at a New Brunswick University. Interestingly, the key informant interview I did with the female farmer was conducted in the barn.

In summary, this research project examines how the 'family' farm and the commodity it produces shape and influence farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. This study considers the impact on farm wives' work of organising family farming around 'family' and 'farming' and the situations these two dimensions create for farm wives and their families. At the same time, this study recognises farm wives and their families are not working and acting in isolation. They and their family farms are tied and linked to a larger community which has been experiencing major economic, social and political changes in the past fifty years. This thesis explores how the farm enterprise and 'farm issues' — commodity production, product marketing and pricing, and seasonal and daily work rhythms — affect a farm wife's work by comparing farm wives' work histories in two contrasting commodity sectors which are themselves located in a changing farm community.

IV: Aims and Objectives of the Case Study

As I have already noted, many researchers are concerned with the study of women's status in farm families and in agriculture. This approach leads them to place primacy on: farm women's power and involvement in decision-making on the farm; farm women's participation in sectorial decision-making; the gendered (or sexual) division of labour on the farm; farm women's quality of life; the intergenerational transmission of property; inheritance issues; the recognition and resolution of equity issues for farm women; women "farmers" (or women as sole farm property owners); the adverse work situations of female farm labourers or racial minorities; farm women and the law and farm women's movements. This case study does not wish to negate these issues and concerns but it is not a study of farm women's status. It does not dwell on differences which exist between male farmers and their wives. This case study concentrates on the different work patterns which emerge between farm wives in dairy and potato farming. As such it aims to study women's work across farm households, not within them.

The study focuses on farm wives' work patterns. By work patterns, this study means the way women divide and co-ordinate their efforts between working in the various aspects of the farm operation, in the household, in their own parallel farming operations, small businesses or other cash generating work and community work. How do women in different commodity sectors allocate their labour between the operation and management of the farm, their family's reproduction, activities which generate or reduce the need for cash and volunteer work? Do women in different commodity sectors face different demands, constraints and opportunities? If so, what

are the similarities and differences in work patterns which emerge for farm wives engaged in potato and dairy farming?[51]

Since farm wives' work exists within the context of family farming, this thesis is concerned with examining how family farming structures and influences farm wives' lives and work activities. It asks: What situations do farm wives confront as a result of how family farming is organised? How do farm wives and their family farms respond to the situations they face? What are the consequences for farm wives' work of combining family and farming into the economic activity of 'family' farming? What are the effects for farm wives' work of organising commodity production in a particular way? How do family farms and farm wives respond to the broader social, economic and political changes occurring within their farm community? The research questions addressed in Part Two can be summarised as follows:

1. How is farm wives' work shaped and influenced by 'family' farming?;

2. How is farm wives' work shaped and influenced by the farm's commodity production?; and

3. How is farm wives' work shaped and influenced by the changing farm community?

This case study endeavours to answer these questions by examining farm wives' work on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada.

The first question explores how 'family' farming places farm wives in a particular work situation. On the family farm, the family household and farm enterprise are combined both spatially and socially. The family home is often the centre of farm operations — through a home office or a large kitchen table — it is where people meet, decisions are made and responsibilities are allocated. The family is also providing all or part of the labour on family farms. Since family farming encompasses both family

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[51] Because the thesis is studying the effects of commodity production on farm wives' work it is a study comparing and contrasting wives' work histories — not a study of differing relationships between husbands and wives (male farmers and farmer's wives). It was, therefore, appropriate to gather women's work histories in order to: first, establish what work women have and have not done; and secondly, to try to establish what external events were resulting in changes in their work patterns. The interviews were designed to establish what had happened, not what should have happened or 'what relationships ought to have been like'. Therefore, the vignette technique outlined by Finch (1987: 105-114) would not have been effective here, though it would be useful for those studying the gendered division of labour, power and decision-making within farm households.

and work in household based production, researchers frequently begin their analysis of farm women's work by looking at the family and how family dynamics influence the farm. Much more neglected is how farming, as an economic activity, influences the family household. What a farm produces and the demands which producing it make on the farm family is the factor least studied in the literature on farm women's work.

The second question examines whether or not the commodity being produced on the family farm affects farm wives' work. Does living on a dairy farm result in different work patterns and activities than living on a potato operation? Is there a discernible rhythm in the production of each commodity which affects the work options and choices of farm wives? Are the daily lives of farm wives producing different commodities different enough to challenge the idea that 'farm women' are a homogeneous group with similar needs and concerns? The need to compare women's work activities in two commodity production processes is to test how similar or divergent the work patterns of these farm women really are. With few exceptions, researchers have considered "farm women" as an homogeneous category. This is akin to treating "workers" as an homogeneous group with the same interests, goals and socio-political realities. This case study questions how reliable research findings are which reduce farm women to their common denominators thereby ignoring the diverse farm enterprises they are living and working on. By considering the different aspects of family farming, this case study argues we will have a better understanding of how individual farm wives and farm families act out their daily lives in circumstances not always of their own choosing.

The third question investigates the interaction between individual lived lives and broader ongoing structural changes in the farm community. People's actions change the farm community, but how that farm community changes directly influences what individual family farms and farm wives can do. The decisions and actions taken on a family farm today will influence the situations farm wives and their family farms will face in the future. While the case study focuses on the situation of contemporary agriculture in New Brunswick, there is a need to understand how historical precedents have shaped the present in order to speculate on the future. Farm wives and their family farms are located in farm communities which have witnessed the effects of economic and agricultural restructuring and changing social attitudes towards the status of women. What impact have these changes had on farm wives' live and work? Are farm wives and their family farms travelling along the same trajectory? If they are travelling along the same trajectory, is it at the same speed and rate? What does the future look like for farm wives and their work in New Brunswick, Canada? This later

question reflects on the issues and concerns facing those interested in the future of family farming and the farm community as we head into the 21st century.

The thesis contributes to the existing literature in the most general sense by providing a further example of farm wives' work and contributions to family farming.[52] But more importantly it provides an in depth analysis of how farm wives' work differs from one commodity sector to the next — as well as within a commodity sector — a perspective which has generally been overlooked in the existing literature. This analysis demonstrates what a farm produces is just as important as socio-personal characteristics, a gendered division of labour and structural changes in agriculture for explaining variations in farm women's work patterns. The case study, however, does not neglect these other explanatory factors in its examination of farm wives' work. As well as commodity, the thesis also considers the impact of social and structural change on farm wives' work — i.e. how changes in farm enterprises (technological, size of the operation, production processes), rural communities (fewer farms, fewer resources), and social expectations (increased education, women's careers and professional development, changes in matrimonial property law) affect farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms — since it is within this context which the family farms studied exist. Finally, the thesis concludes with a discussion of how farm wives' lived experiences[53] ultimately challenge our theoretical understandings of their work.

V: ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is organised into three parts. This first part introduced you to the key concepts, scope and parameters of the case study at the heart of this thesis. The second part of the thesis presents the case study findings while the third part considers the

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[52] In her review of the Canadian literature, Shaver (1993) identifies New Brunswick as an under-represented province in terms of research. In her database of 208 studies, only 5 (2.4%) made reference to New Brunswick, Canada.

[53] No effort has been made to create 'ideal types' from this research. While ideal types may have their place, all too often it is the 'real' lived experiences of farm women which come to be viewed as anomalies rather than the 'ideal type'. Unfortunately we do not live in a perfect world so our most rational ideas do not tend to reflect reality — and while many would argue the point of comparison should be between our 'ideal types' and what we discover (Marshall, 1994: 231-232), I would argue this only clouds the issue. Parsons' projection of the nuclear family as the functional, 'ideal' family for modern times (Cheal, 1991) has resulted in decades of study of the 'dysfunctional' family. The 'ideal type' is always in danger of being viewed as the 'norm' which leaves the irregularities of the real world to be viewed as 'abnormal'. For this reason, I have opted to discuss the women as they presented themselves to me, rather than reconstruct them into composites or 'ideal types'.

implications these findings have for our theoretical understandings of farm women's work.

In Chapter One you met Barbara and Betty. Even though these two women are both living and working on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada, their family farm situations and work histories are quite different. Of course, quantitative studies would be successful in illustrating the structural and socio-personal differences between Betty and Barbara. But they would have difficulty documenting how Betty and Barbara adapt their work activities to respond to changes in family responsibilities, the farm's organisation and the changing farm community. It is the in-depth interview which provides the detailed accounts of Betty and Barbara's unique work and farm histories and the interaction between these two dimensions of their lives. Their stories represent the range of responses to be found in the interview data to be presented in Part Two.

The second chapter provided a brief history of New Brunswick's changing farm community. Specifically it presented evidence of structural change in the agricultural sector: the shift from small, mixed holdings to larger, more specialised operations. As we discussed, the farm community has not been immune to larger social and economic changes either. Farm women are working within this changing community. Even though farm women and their families may initiate changes in their own work activities and family farm operations, they may be the recipients of unwanted broader social change. Knowing how the farm community is changing will provide insight into the situations farm wives face which in turn will lead to a better understanding of their work histories.

The final introductory chapter discussed the particulars of the New Brunswick case study. It began with an examination of the key concepts: family farms, farm wives and work. The chapter then discussed how farm wives' work has been treated and examined by researchers in their attempts to make sense of farm women's changing and multifaceted work experiences. It outlined the rationale for studying farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada.

Part Two provides detailed accounts of the case study findings. It considers how farm wives' work is shaped and influenced by: 'family' farming; a farm's commodity production; and ongoing political, economic and social change within the farm community. It argues these three dimensions are major factors in accounting for the diversity among farm wives and the changing nature of their work. A chapter is

devoted to each of these dimensions in an effort to understand how farm wives contribute to family farms and how family farms at the same time contribute to the work which farm wives do. The final chapter in Part Two discusses the conclusions which can be drawn from this case study of farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada.

Building on the case study findings, Part Three questions the theoretical models and categories used to analyse farm women's work. It argues the spatial categories of domestic, on farm, off farm and community work conceal as much as they reveal about farm women's work. Using case study data, this section begins the task of delineating the complexities concealed within each of these spatial categories of work. It concludes by arguing if we are to better understand farm women's work we need to challenge the analytic categories which have shaped our thinking, data collection and final analysis.

Part Two:

A Study of Farm Wives' Work on Dairy and Potato Farms in New Brunswick, Canada

Family farms by definition involve the family in farming. This means 'family' farming is organised around and combines two very strong social institutions — the family and the work place. Two social institutions which have tended to be separated and treated quite differently in our thinking and research on industrial capitalism. This has meant researchers studying farm women's work are caught trying to juggle family dimensions and farm dimensions, as much as farm women themselves. Perhaps not surprisingly then, researchers have tended to associate farm women with the family household and farm men with the farm enterprise invoking such phrases as 'the barn is his, the house is hers'.[1] At the same time, they have emphasised how difficult and inappropriate it is to separate the family household from the farm enterprise when studying farm women's work because the two domains are often socially and geographically enmeshed.

Despite this admonition, academics have tended to give primacy to family issues over farm issues in their study of farm women's work. Our inattention to how different agricultural products are produced is partially a consequence of being more concerned with how farm women contribute to the 'family' farm enterprise rather than with *how the family 'farm' enterprise contributes to women's work*. Largely because women were and continue to be associated with family issues rather than farm issues, efforts to account for the variegated ways farm women contribute to agriculture has produced an emphasis on how certain aspects of family affect their work rather than an understanding of how aspects of farming affect their work. Ultimately, what is required is an understanding of how both these dimensions — family and farming — affect farm wives' work since it is undoubtedly the interactions between these two spheres which come to shape and influence their work lives.

The first two chapters of Part Two investigate the consequences for farm women's work of organising family farming around both 'family' and 'farming'. Since most women enter farming through marriage, farm wives are the focus of the case study.

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[1] Bush (1982), for example, entitled her paper: "The Barn is His, the House is Mine..."

But what does it mean to be a farmer's wife? Put another way: What implications does a farmer's work have for his wife's work? I have come to realise the answer to this question is quite complex and multifaceted engaging several features of both family and farming[2]. It is this question which leads me in the following chapters to pursue the way farm wives' work gets incorporated into the family farm enterprise because of the close proximity of the family household and farm enterprise; the expectation that family labour will be part of the farm production process; and the difficulties of physically and socially separating the family and the farm enterprise.

By considering how family farming is organised, the case study explicitly examines how both 'family' and farming contribute to farm wives' work. Chapter Four focuses on how aspects of 'family' — marrying the farmer, extended families and the interplay of family and farm — shape and influence farm wives' work. Chapter Five concentrates on how 'farm' dimensions — in particular, how what the farm sets out to do — shape and influence farm wives' work. Specifically it looks at how the work to be done on dairy and potato farms — the farmer's job — and the broader socio-economic arrangements of these two commodities in New Brunswick affect farm wives' work. It should be noted for the most part these chapters only implicitly discuss how wives contribute to the family farms they live on. It would be impossible to consider the way farm wives' work is structured by 'family' farming without recognising they are making a multitude of contributions to family farm operations. But it is the way 'family' farming contributes to farm wives' work, rather than how farm wives contribute to family farming, which is at the heart of this case study.

The work farm wives do is also in part structured by the farm communities they live in. In Chapter Two we saw New Brunswick's farm community has not been immune to economic expansion, global restructuring, or changing social attitudes. As the farm community changes, women's expectations and what is expected of them and their families can also be expected to change. While it is not within the scope of this thesis to present a history of dairy and potato farming in New Brunswick or to trace the entire history of 'family' farming in the province, it is important to locate farm wives, their work and family farms within their historical context. The chapter examines how agricultural restructuring and the changing status of women have affected family farms and farm wives' work in New Brunswick. By examining the

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[2] I would also suggest other researchers' preoccupation with gender inequities and internal relations of production are more reflective of 'how the job gets done' or 'under what conditions the job gets done' rather than the 'job to be done'.

historical context and circumstances within which farm wives are working we should be better able to consider 'what kind of people are coming to prevail'.

In effect, this case study of farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada follows in the path of C. Wright Mills (1959: 6-7) by considering:

1. How is 'family' farming organised and what are the consequences for farm wives' work of organising it in this way?;

2. How has the historical period within which these farm wives are located affected their family farms and work?; and

3. What does the future look like for farm wives in New Brunswick? What kind of work situations are farm wives facing on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms?

Chapter Seven summarises the conclusions which can be drawn from the case study findings. Overall, Part Two argues understanding the 'job to be done' and the conditions under which 'the job is done' are both critical for explaining the diversity among farm wives and their work.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF 'FAMILY' FARMING ON FARM WIVES' WORK

'Family' farming conjures up images of families working together in harmony to produce the world's food. The backdrop is an idyllic, rural landscape filled with babbling brooks, magnificent trees, meandering fences, gently rolling hills and pure refreshing air. Farm families do not have to leave home to go to work. They can be 'their own boss', working with the seasons, in the great outdoors. It has been portrayed as an ideal setting to raise children, live and work (Jenkins, 1992). This vision of agriculture promotes the positive features of farming and rural living while downplaying the enormous pressures farm families actually face (Valentine, 1997).

Family farming combines family ownership and family labour in a family enterprise. Stress and anxiety are constant companions for the farm family as they struggle to make ends meet in order to stay in farming — in an economic environment where one out of every three farms fail every five years (Statistics Canada, 1993: 10). Family farms are under pressure to maintain family relations at the same time they are producing the commodity the farm sells. To be a family farm, one requires the other.

If family relations break down, the farm's labour supply is in jeopardy. If the farm fails, the family can lose both its livelihood and its home. As we will see in this chapter, separating the family from the farm is very difficult given the multiple ways they are interlinked. This chapter investigates the different forms 'family' relations take on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada and their impact on farm wives' work.

The first section of the chapter considers what dealing with 'family' means for farm wives. The second section examines marriage and farming and what work is like for women who have married farmers. The third section examines how extended 'family', the need to keep the 'family' farming and concerns for the family's well-being affect farm wives' work. The fourth section considers the implications for farm

wives' work of not being able to easily distinguish between the domains of 'family' and 'farming'.

I. Dealing with Family

Researchers have spent much of their time discussing how the 'family' influences farm wives' work. Yet the basic question of why study 'family' is seldom, if ever, addressed. The most obvious answer is family obligations have an important influence on the work farm wives do[1]. 'Family' and family obligations create important work situations for farm wives. Put another way, a portion of farm wives' work is organised around family. But who constitutes the family and what family relations are to be found on family farms?

Obviously, a wife must deal with her husband. It is this relationship and the unequal distribution of property, wealth, power and decision-making within family farm households which has drawn most attention in the literature on farm women's work. This research has, in fact, produced a better understanding of the gendered nature of work on family farms and the inequities women face. However, my purpose in examining marriage and farming is to better understand how the husband's job comes to shape and influence his wife's work patterns and activities. What kind of job are women marrying into when they marry farmers?

Finch (1983) and Delphy and Leonard (1992) argue the usual focus on women is as mothers rather than as wives; and this is particularly true in the literature on 'family' farming, even though it has 'designated women as farm wives'. Sachs (1996: 134) points out:

> Designation of women as farmwives defines them primarily in relation to their husbands rather than emphasising their relation to their children, as in 'farm mothers,' or stressing their relation to the farm, as 'farm women' or 'farmers'.

But in spite of this designation, researchers have generally failed to recognise the extent to which a farm wife's work is reflective of her farmer husband's work. Rather than studying how features of farming affect farm wives' work, researchers have focused on features of 'family'. 'Family' in turn, I would argue, has taken precedence over the 'specific consequences of marriage'. Farm wives are, of course, often mothers as well as wives. Both roles engage them in reproducing the family —

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[1] For a broad literature review of research on family obligations see Finch, 1989; and for a more in-depth discussion from survey and case study data in Britain see Finch and Mason, 1993.

frequently viewed as future labour power for the farm — as well as the 'family' farm itself. While this case study does not ignore women as mothers, its primary goal is to examine the consequences for women's work of marrying a farmer.

Marriage invokes images of family. In this literature, however, the concept of 'family' remains limited and fixed to nuclear conjugal households:

> In the Western world, the concept of the family farm includes a nuclear family, especially the conjugal unit, as the strongest feature (Sachs, 1996:134).

Consequently, researchers have proceeded on the basis the 'traditional'[2] nuclear family, following a predetermined life cycle[3], is the 'family' to be found in family farming. This has led Whatmore (1991b: 140) to argue our concept of family is inadequate because it lacks an understanding of the social relations which structure it and the "family itself has been poorly theorised" (1991a: 71). The general solution has been to re-examine the gendered division of labour and inequities within nuclear family households. This has led studies to emphasise the unequal relations between husbands and wives in terms of property ownership, power and decision-making in the family farm enterprise (Alston, 1995b; Delphy and Leonard, 1994; Gasson and Errington, 1993; James, 1982; Smith, 1987; Whatmore, 1991a and 1991b). Such analysis, has still failed to look beyond the nuclear family to the instances where more complex family relations emerge within the 'family' farm structure. Sachs (1996: 136) argues the presence of complex family relations on 'family' farms is bound to affect farm wives' work but it has received little attention in the literature.

The families in my case study suggest the 'traditional', nuclear family represents only one form of family composition to be found in 'family' farming. Extended families are still very prevalent on 'family' farms in New Brunswick. I found family farms being run by both intergenerational and intragenerational family structures. Intergenerational farms were represented by parents farming with their sons, husbands

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[2] It should be noted the word 'traditional' has suffered from considerable and confusing slippage. In the 1950s, rural sociologists depicted the 'traditional' rural family as a close-knit, extended kinship network (Marshall, 1994: 455). In contrast, the 'traditional' family as employed in the contemporary rural sociology literature appears to mean a conservative, patriarchal nuclear family unit, which in the 1950s would have been understood as the model 'modern' urban household (Cheal, 1991).

[3] According to Marsden, the life-cycle phases for a 'typical' family farm household are: "marriage and the setting up of a conjugal household; an expansion phase, associated with the birth of children; a dispersion phase, when children leave home; an independent phase, when the conjugal couple live alone following the departure of children; and a replacement phase when the farm is taken over by the children and the older couple retire off the farm" (quoted by Whatmore, 1990: 42).

farming with their wives' fathers and even a widowed wife farming with her parents-in-law. Intragenerational farms were present with brothers farming together thereby combining multiple families into one farm operation. In fact, half the 'family' farms in my study would not fit the model nuclear family portrayed in the literature.

Moreover, family relations can change as the farm changes and these changes in family dynamics can precipitate changes in farm wives' work patterns and activities. 'Family' farms can involve a complex array of family relationships as they evolve from and into inter-, intra- and/or nuclear family operations. How these less studied 'family' farm compositions can influence farm wives' work is more fully explored in the third section of this chapter.

Farm wives can often find themselves trying to deal with family matters and farm concerns simultaneously. Where one begins and the other ends is not always clearly discernible. As Ghorayshi notes, for farm wives:

> The farm household is not completely, physically separated from the realm of production. Here one does not leave the family to go to work. When one is at work, one is, at the same time, in the family. Work time is not easily distinguished from non-work time (Ghorayshi, 1989: 575).

On a 'family' farm where the family household and farm enterprise are socially and geographically combined — where does one begin and the other end? Other researchers have, of course, struggled with this dilemma. For example, Sachs (1996: 130) argues: "On Pennsylvania farms many women take their infants and young children to the barn with them when they milk the cows. How should such work be counted — as farm work for the family's dairy business, as child care, or as both?". Haney and Knowles (1988: 8) raise the same issue by reflecting on Elbert's example of one "upstate New York farm woman, who, throwing up the lid of her washing machine, invited one social scientist 'to sort out farm wash from home wash'". Clear separations can not be easily made precisely because 'family' farming encompasses work in both family and farming.

In summary, farm wives engaged in 'family' farming end up 'dealing with the family' in a number of ways. First, as the wives of male farmers. Secondly, when 'family' farming combines more than one family household into the economic enterprise, wives must deal not only with their nuclear family but their extended family as well. Thirdly, the boundaries between 'family' and farming may not be easily discerned. Consequently, "the survival of the enterprise is directly experienced as a

family concern" (Ghorayshi, 1989: 573). It is how these three aspects of family affect farm wives' work which will be addressed in the following chapter sections.

II. Marriage and Farming

This section begins the examination of how farm wives become incorporated into their husbands' work, that is "the processes whereby wives' labour is incorporated into work which is essentially their husbands" (Finch, 1983, 9). Finch (1983) and Delphy and Leonard (1992) argue the work which wives are required to do is often determined by their husband's occupation.[4] Their husbands' jobs will determine their standard of living, the location of their home and work opportunities as well as the amount of time they can devote to various activities. Moreover, when they can be available for work and leisure activities is further structured by their husbands' work. Quoting Barker, Finch (1983: 21) writes:

> Barker has suggested that a wife 'has her standard of living determined by [her husband], however hard she works; her rhythm, pattern and place of living are dictated by his; and what is required of her as a wife will be in considerable measure determined by his occupation'.

Delphy and Leonard (1992: 241) echo this position when they write:

> The social position of a woman's husband not only influences the actual tasks she performs, but also her rhythm, patterns and place of living, how hard she has to work, and her standard of living.

The question at hand, then, is: What does it mean to be a farmer's wife?

Ghorayshi (1989: 574) argues "marriage with a farmer brings the expectation of work with the spouse". Yet there has been a growing awareness that 'work with the spouse' or life as a farm wife is not a uniform experience. Farm wives are not an homogeneous group of women, doing identical work on seemingly similar 'family' farms. Nevertheless, they share the phenomena of being married to a farmer. But how many women in my study married established farmers? How many wives made a joint decision to farm with their husbands? How many wives had farming backgrounds? These are the questions taken up in the first section, *The farmer takes a wife,* since women's backgrounds and the kinds of farms they marry into will undoubtedly influence the work they do. The second section, *Life as a farm wife,* considers the

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[4] This point is borne out by a number of other studies which look at specific occupations. For example see Kanter, 1977; Luxton, 1980; Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame, 1981; Ardener, 1984; Kirkwood, 1984; Tremayne, 1984 and Adkins, 1995.

work farm wives do and how they come to be incorporated into their farmer husband's work.

A. The farmer takes a wife

Getting married means embarking on a life together as a couple. When a farmer takes a wife[5], he is marrying a woman who will invariably share the ups and downs of 'family' farming. In the same way a politician's wife, police officer's wife or 'company' man's wife must deal with her husband's job requirements. A farm wife may be genuinely interested in farming, evidenced by the four[6] women in my study who had earned Agricultural degrees before getting married. Even though she never grew up on a farm, Diane was interested in agriculture enough to pursue it as a career. In fact, she met her future husband at agricultural school:

> My husband and I met at agricultural college. He was studying animal science and I was studying plant science. Afterwards, he was working on a dairy farm and wanted to be a dairy farmer. We were camping and we saw this place. I wanted to support his decision to be a dairy farmer so we bought the farm the year after we got married.

Some women may not have actively chosen farming as their occupation but found themselves working on the 'family' farm by default. For example, Priscilla disclosed:

> We couldn't rely on hired labour that's why I went out because there was a lack of men to do the job. My mother-in-law always worked out on the farm. If I'd had other choices perhaps I wouldn't have done it.

Still others, like Pearl, may never have wanted to marry a farmer but nonetheless did:

> I've never really lived it down. I lived in the town with the agricultural college and I always said 'I am never marrying a farmer, I'm going to marry a teacher and have the summers off' — him being a farmer was not my first choice.

Yet, as Table 4.1 illustrates, almost two-thirds of the women in my study married men who were already established farmers while only one-third made the decision to farm as a couple.

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[5] Interestingly, the rural farm population in New Brunswick has a higher incidence of marriage than the general population. Sixty-four per cent of the rural farm population is married compared to 55.5% of all New Brunswickers. The rural farm population is also half as likely to be separated, widowed or divorced but just as likely to be single as the general population (Statistics Canada, Catalogue #95-319, November 1992: 14).

[6] These four women are: Patricia, Diane, Deirdre and Debbie.

Table 4.1: The Decision to Farm

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Husband was already farming	9	10	19
Joint decision to farm	5	6	11
Total	14	16	30

Gasson (1980) argues women's farm work will differ according to whether or not they marry established farmers or jointly decide with their husbands to farm. She writes:

> The husband's status at marriage...could also contribute to differences...[in wives' work]. It is suggested that the woman's chances of playing an active role in the farm business will be greater if she and her husband start farming together, after marriage, than if she marries a man who is already farming on his own (Gasson, 1980: 173).

My study would support Gasson's position if 'an active role in the farm business' pertains to wives' participation in the farm's commodity production process. Nine[7] of the eleven women in my study who jointly decided with their husbands to farm are very active in farm production. Among this group, only two, Dawn and Phoebe, do not regularly work in the farm's commodity production. Dawn has allergies which have become more severe over the years limiting her involvement; while Phoebe has two pre-school aged children as well as off farm employment. Meanwhile only ten[8] of the nineteen women who married established farmers are regularly working alongside their husbands in their farm's commodity production.

Clearly couples, like Betty and Russell, who jointly decide to farm together make a commitment to farming as a couple. Dayle, who jointly agreed to farm with her husband, would concur:

> We have been partners in the farm. I have been working my fifty per cent. When you get married, you'll do it. When you know your husband wants it so bad. You just learn to take the good with the bad.

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[7] These nine women are: Diane, Daisy, Dayle, Dolly, Denise, Betty, Patricia, Posy and Pamela.

[8] These ten women are: Debra, Daphne, Dixie, Donna, Dotty, Debbie, Barbara, Priscilla, Paula and Paige. The other nine women who married established farmers do not regularly work alongside their husbands doing barn and field work: Deirdre, Danielle, Dorothy, Delia, Phyllis, Peggy, Perdita, Penny and Pearl.

However, just because women marry established farmers does not mean they will not be actively involved in the farm operation. Even though the percentage of participation is higher among women who jointly decided with their husbands to farm, the level of active participation in the farm's commodity production among those who marry established farmers is not insignificant at fifty-two per cent. Donna's remarks typify the women who both married established farmers and actively participate in commodity production:

> I feel very much like a partner. It's an important thing to talk a lot and to know what's going on. It makes sense for me to put my efforts here in the farm to make a go of it.

As will be shown, 'making a go of it' often means more than just participating in the farm's commodity production. All farm wives become incorporated in their farmer husbands' work in one way or another. The actual ways in which they are incorporated may vary, but the fact they are incorporated does not.

Finch (1983: 99) contends a wife's incorporation into her husband's job will be partially influenced by the skills which she can offer to his work. In theory, women with farming backgrounds have more knowledge and experience of farming than those without. Women with farming backgrounds probably know what they are taking on when they marry farmers. Those with non-farming backgrounds may know what they are taking on but are more likely to walk in blindly or have a romantic view of the whole undertaking. Regardless of their backgrounds, they are entering a marriage which will encompass both family and work spheres. As Gisele Ireland (1983: 17) so vividly notes:

> The woman standing at the altar in her wedding finery...is pledging all her physical and emotional resources to an occupation that is as varied as the seasons that govern it. Thirty-one percent of the women marrying a farmer do so without any previous experience. The remaining women who come to their husbands with a farming background have conquered one of the hurdles, but face many more as the years progress.

As Table 4.2 demonstrates, among the respondents in my study, fifty-three per cent

Table 4.2: Interviewees' Backgrounds

Grew up on a Farm	Potatoes	%	Dairy	%	Total	%
Yes	9	64	7	44	16	53
No	5	36	9	56	14	47
Total	14	100	16	100	30	100

had a farming background while forty-seven per cent did not. Therefore, the incidence of 'no previous experience' is even higher in this study than Ireland indicates. Interestingly, a larger percentage (64%) of women on potato farms had a farming background than women on dairy farms (44%). What's more all five women on potato farms who did not grow up on a farm married established farmers. Yet three of the nine women on dairy farms — Dawn, Daisy and Diane — who did not grow up on a farm jointly decided to go into dairy farming with their husbands. Dawn explained her decision as follows:

> It was quite a thing when we decided to come up here and farm. We had a new house and no mortgage but my husband wanted to farm. It was quite a big step and it meant giving up our brand new house and moving to this old farm house. I did feel apprehensive because I never grew up on a farm but I went along with it.

While Daisy told me:

> My husband was helping his father with the turkey farm when we married. Together we decided to go into dairy farming and then when his father wanted to retire we agreed to take over the turkeys since everything was already here.

Diane, on the other hand, didn't grow up on a farm but she was clearly interested in horticulture or farming as a career because she completed a degree in plant science at an agricultural college. These three women were the exception in that they did not grow up on farms but they agreed to enter family farming as a joint endeavour with their husbands. The more common practice was for women who didn't grow up on farms to marry established farmers:

Table 4.3: Women who did not grow up on farms

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Husband was already farming	5	6	11
Joint decision to farm	0	3	3
	5	9	14

On the other hand, women with farming backgrounds were just as likely to make the decision to farm with their husbands as they were to marry established farmers:

Table 4.4: Women who grew up on farms

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Husband was already farming	4	4	8
Joint decision to farm	5	3	8
	9	7	16

Prominent among the eight couples who decided to farm together are three families who emigrated from Holland to farm in New Brunswick. Patricia, Dayle and Dolly all explained how difficult it was to find farmland in Holland, they all have farm backgrounds and they all shared their husbands' desire to farm. As Dolly explained:

> My husband and I both grew up on farms in Holland but he had an office job and each weekend we would visit our parents on the farm. We talked it over. I knew he didn't like office work. We had to make a decision. We saw some farms being advertised in different magazines and we came here to look. Together we decided to move here and buy a farm. We came two years after our initial visit.

Besides Dayle and Dolly, Denise was the only other woman who grew up on a farm to marry a dairy farmer. She told me:

> I grew up on a small mixed farm. This farm was in my husband's family for five generations, it was left to him and his three siblings and we had to buy all of them out. Together we decided that we would buy them out and farm here.

Notably, all five wives who jointly decided to go into potato farming with their husbands grew up on farms. Betty and Patricia were involved with their husbands in establishing their own farm operations while the other three husband/wife teams — Pamela, Phoebe and Posy — actually agreed to take over the wife's parents' farm. Pamela divulged:

> My husband and I were both from mixed farm backgrounds. We started with land from my father. In the spring we planted twelve acres of seed potatoes, and then we got married in August before the harvest.

Whereas Phoebe recalled:

> My husband went to community college but he had no guarantee of a job so my father offered to take him on his farm. He wasn't paid a salary but had his own potato acreage and animals as pay to sell. It didn't take us long to decide to buy this farm, we knew we wanted some place. My father bought it first, the year before we got married and we started farming it, and then we bought it from him.

Posy's situation is a bit different in that she wasn't really interested in farming but since she was an only child and her husband wanted to farm, they took up farming:

> I was an only child and my dad was getting older. I didn't want to farm. I had had to do the chores before school, at night and in the summer since I was eight. After high school I went to business college and worked as a secretary. It was my husband who wanted to farm. The first year we were married we stayed with my parents and worked on the farm. We didn't own the farm then. My husband also worked in a garage that first year.

These three potato farms provide examples of a wife's parents helping their son-in-law and daughter establish themselves in farming. Gasson and Errington (1993: 149) contend this was more customary in the past:

> ...many farmers have in the past married farmers' daughters and their in-laws may have helped them to start farming.

Delphy and Leonard (1992) argue this is only the case when there are no male sons to inherit the farm. While Delphy and Leonard's position holds true in Posy's case it does not in the other two.

All the other farms transferred from one generation to the next, in my sample, follow more conventional patrilineal patterns. Consequently, it is more common for wives to marry into their husbands' 'family' establishments than it is for husbands to marry into their wives' 'family' farms. This means wives must usually contend with their husbands' extended family more than husbands must deal with their wives' extended family which, as we will see later in this chapter, has consequences for farm wives' work.

As Table 4.5 illustrates, eight of the nineteen husbands who were already farming when they married, married women who grew up on farms while eleven married women with no farming background. The split is quite even across commodity: on both potato and dairy farms four wives had grown up on a farm[9]; while five of the women on potato farms and six of the women on dairy farms did not grow up on farms[10].

Table 4.5: Husband was already farming

Wife had Grown up on farm	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Yes	4	4	8
No	5	6	11
Total	9	10	19

This finding supports Gasson and Errington's observation that farmers are marrying women from outside the farm community:

> Increasingly nowadays farmers are marrying outside agriculture, which means that wives have less experience of farming... (1993: 149).

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[9] The women who grew up on farms are: Phyllis, Paula, Peggy, Paige and Donna, Deirdre, Dotty and Debbie.

[10] The women who did not grow up on farms are: Barbara, Perdita, Penny, Pearl, Priscilla, Debra, Danielle, Dorothy, Daphne, Delia and Dixie.

Certainly some women report being very 'green' about farming. Pearl explained:

> I knew I married a farmer but I only partially knew what it meant. I was new to farming.

Penny and Danielle indicated moving to the farm required a big adjustment for them since they grew up in large cities and they didn't really know what to expect. Penny confided:

> The first couple of years was a big adjustment for me because I grew up in the middle of a city with 100,000 people, I didn't really know what to expect.

While Danielle recalled:

> Farming is not part of my background and I was in shock when I first came here. I moved from a large US city and everything was different. I moved from one country to another; from an urban to a rural area. Nothing was familiar.

Some of these women, like Delia, had romantic visions of country life:

> My husband was working on his uncle's dairy farm when I met him. I knew I was getting into this, it was a romantic deal back then. I grew up in the city and always loved the countryside as a child. I no longer have romantic ideas of my role on the farm.

But the sense of romance and need for adjustment are not confined to those women without a farm background. Women who grew up on farms also faced such challenges. For instance, Peggy revealed:

> Love is blind. If I'd known how our farm was going to be set up and structured, I probably wouldn't have got married. I grew up on a farm, and the same things go on: wives don't take part and husbands can or can't relay what's going on. The set up we have with our in-laws is a very unequal relationship, there's a lot of uncertainty, it's very hard to deal with this set-up. Things aren't the same as they were on my parents' farm.

Yet growing up on a farm is often perceived as an asset since it suggests women have some knowledge and experience of farm life. This view was supported by some women in my study. Phyllis told me, "I grew up on a farm which really helped." While Donna concurred:

> Growing up on a farm gave me a taste of what I was getting into: we felt tied down by the farm, we would face breakdowns, haying took lots of time, chores, the garden and so on were normal practices at home.

In fact, three-quarters of the women who grew up on farms were actively involved in farm production while only half the women who didn't grow up on farms were actively involved in farm production. However, half is still a significant proportion. Half the women who did not have previous farm experience, who did not bring farm knowledge and skills with them when they married the farmer, actively participated in

the farm's commodity production. In fact, some women, like Debra, were determined to overcome their lack of farm experience and to participate in farm work:

> I had no prior experience in farming and I needed to prove myself, prove that a girl can do things. It was cut and dry. The farm was there, my husband didn't expect me to help but he always appreciated the work I did.

Conversely, Dotty disclosed; "I swore I'd never marry a farmer because I grew up on a farm and I knew what I was getting into."

The women who married farmers may or may not have known 'what they were getting into' but by virtue of marrying established farmers their lives have become entwined in 'family' farming. As Table 4.6 shows, all of the farm wives in my study

Table 4.6: Number of Years Interviewees were Married

Decade	#Years Married	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
1991-1995	< 5	0	0	0
1986-1990	6-10	1	1	2
1981-1985	11-15	1	5	6
1976-1980	16-20	3	5	8
1971-1975	21-25	2	1	3
1966-1970	26-30	3	0	3
1961-1965	31-35	2	2	4
1956-1960	36-40	1	1	2
1951-1955	41-45	0	0	0
1941-1950	46-55	1	1	2
Total		14	16	30

have been married for at least five years while two, Denise and Posy, have been married for fifty years. Denise and Posy also represent the only two farms in my study which have retired from farming. One other woman, Dixie, is also no longer farming. But she and her husband decided to stop farming within five years of their marriage:

> My husband had been farming on his own for about ten years when I met him. I wanted to marry a farmer, I wanted the stability. The farm was part of the package and I wanted to be right in there with him. I never grew up on a farm but I had a fairly good sense of it — not how tied down we would be — a good idea of the physical work but not a good idea of the mental work.

However, as the interview progressed it was clear her concept of farming being a 'stable' occupation was short lived. Moreover, her romantic vision of farming soon wore off and by the end of the interview she divulged she had been the catalyst for her husband leaving the farm and pursuing a new career. In her words, "he would still be

there or dead from hard work. I could see we weren't going anywhere, the debts were mounting, and it just wasn't worth it to go on".

The majority of the women in my study began life on their farms within days of getting married. Whether they jointly decided to farm or they married established farmers, whether or not they knew what the job entailed, they embarked on the demanding role of 'life as a farm wife'.

B. Life as a farm wife

In Chapter Three I recalled how the Supreme Court of Canada agreed with the lower court judges' decision Irene Murdoch had simply "done the work of any ranch wife". This verdict strongly suggests being a 'farm wife' carries a broad customary and even legal expectation farm wives will not only take responsibility for the household and child care but participate in farm work as well. Weitzman (1981) argued the marriage contract made wives responsible for the household and child care and husbands responsible for household and child support. If farm wives are also expected to take on farm work, as the Court verdict suggests, the expectations for a farm wife are not the same as they are for a housewife. Sachs (1996: 133) implicitly makes this point when she argues:

> The proper role for a woman in urban areas was as a housewife and in rural areas as a farmwife.

Irene Murdoch took total responsibility for the farm work during the five months of the year her husband was absent from the ranch; and when he was there she worked alongside him, 'just as a man would'. But it counted for nothing because her work was not considered extraordinary. She had only done what was expected of her as a farm wife. Sachs (1996: 134) herself argues:

> Farmwives share many of the duties of housewives, but in addition, they perform various activities related to the farm enterprise, such as bookkeeping, milking cows, running errands, supervising farm labor, growing and preserving food, various farm chores, and 'filling-in' or doing what 'needs to be done'.

In other words, a farm wife is expected to contribute her labour to her husband's occupation — the family farm.

Janet Finch (1983: 89-102) explicates three ways wives can take part in their husbands' work as, often unpaid, assistants. They can do so through: *peripheral activities*, *back-up services* and/or as an *additional worker*. Wives can be required to participate in activities which are peripheral to their husbands' job like special social

functions. During such events, a wife can be called upon to act as her husband's advocate or representative or she may be expected to report information from her husband's clients to him. For a wife, the social event thus provides a backdrop for gathering and disseminating information pertinent to her husband's job.

Back-up services, unlike those in the peripheral category, are central to the daily performance of a husband's work. They include those activities which are of a routine and non-specialised character like answering the telephone, taking messages, filing, or dealing with clients or sales representatives. According to Finch (1983: 94), "some wives may be doing this on a regular basis, and others become incorporated just at times of crisis, or when their husbands' work load is particularly heavy".

The additional worker refers to those situations where wives actually take part in the core activities of their husbands' work. They can do so in three ways: first, a wife can work *instead of* her husband; secondly she can work *by proxy*; and thirdly she can work *alongside* her husband. Wives can work instead of their husbands to the extent they have the necessary skills to take over his job. Finch claims wives usually work instead of their husbands "in his absence, often in crisis". Each year Irene Murdoch's husband was absent for five months so she worked instead of him as a matter of course. Wives who work by proxy do so by 'stepping in' for their husbands. Finch focuses on those women who not only 'step in' but also act in 'their own right' precisely because they are the 'wife of' a particular person. For example, diplomats' wives and presidents' wives often act in their own right at the same time they are stepping in for their husbands. A wife may also work alongside her husband doing the tasks and work he delegates to her in order to get his job done. Again, Irene Murdoch identified doing such tasks.

In my data, all these situations emerge. Farm wives take part in their farmer husbands' work through peripheral activities, by providing back-up services and by being additional workers. Farm wives have less peripheral work than the wives of professionals and diplomats whose jobs require a public persona. Instead, farm wives tend to provide backup services and be more directly involved in the production process. Where their work is peripheral, in Finch's sense, is in gathering information about the political and economic environment of farming and of restricting information to prying outsiders. This was a role Ardener exemplified for the wives of academics:

> ...a wife might occasionally have to resist being gently 'pumped' for information which her interlocutor might hesitate to ask directly from her husband. Most wives prudently profess to be ignorant of college or other secrets (Ardener, 1984:42).

This situation was most apparent in my interview with Pearl. I interviewed Pearl because Kelly told me she took no interest in her husband's farm. According to Kelly, Pearl simply input the farm finances into the computer and the rest was her husband's problem. However, during my interview with Pearl, it became clear she not only knows the farm accounts intimately but she is also deeply embedded in farm management and planning as she develops and writes the rationales for grant and funding proposals. In fact, she interrogated me for half an hour before answering my interview questions to ensure I was indeed an academic and I would maintain her confidentiality. Otherwise, I am certain she would not have confided her level of involvement in the farm to me. Pearl's public stance to other farm wives is a defence mechanism to avoid discussing particulars of her farm. She successfully avoids disclosing her farm's position and activities by feigning a false ignorance in large part because she sees her farming neighbours as her competitors.

The most obvious piece of information which I wanted but farm wives wished to keep secret was their gross farm receipts[11]. Only half a dozen women would give me a ball park figure of how much the farm grossed the previous year. Yet the majority of them took responsibility for farm booking and were therefore in a position to know their farm's financial worth. They would, on the other hand, all reveal how family and farm finances were organised, the number of accounts they had and their involvement with farm loans. This suggests some issues are considered more sensitive than others; and wives resist telling their business to outsiders. This is probably a reflection of not knowing exactly when comments will be misunderstood or misconstrued, as Tremayne (1984: 131) points out:

> .... wives are never sure to what extent what they are saying or doing can be damaging or helpful to their husband and his career (Tremayne, 1984: 131).

In fact, Penny best made this point when she told me: "I've often been afraid I am not saying the right thing to the right person".

Penny was referring to the pressures she felt when dealing with farm related phone calls. According to Penny, "the main part of the farm doesn't involve" her and what's

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[11] Alston (1995a: 525) reports the women she contacted to interview had to be reassured "the bank had not given their names for investigation" which as she puts it "demonstrated strongly the difficult economic circumstances...and unfortunate relationships many families are experiencing with their banks". New Brunswick farms are undoubtedly experiencing similar phenomena since such information was not forthcoming.

more she's "not that interested in farming". But, like all the farm women in my study, she performed some back-up services to her husband's job. Most often farm wives are answering the phone, helping with or taking full responsibility for the farm's bookkeeping, and greeting farm visitors and sales representatives. Deirdre explained:

> What I do mainly is answer the phone. All the calls for the farm come here. I call and order the feed for the farm. And I sell straw. People come here to buy straw so I take the money and help them put it in their car or truck.

Through back-up services, farm wives are effectively "providing semi-skilled 'women's work' services'" (Finch, 1983: 94). Frequently women identified themselves as assistants, 'gophers'[12] and 'Girl Fridays'. Posy recalled:

> I liked assisting. I did all the books and each year that work increased, it got to be more and more.

Phoebe indicated:

> I am the gopher. I get sent to get things. I'm a jack of all trades. It's the part I like best actually because you can't plan or worry about it, you just do it.

Patricia, Delia and Debbie also identified themselves as gophers, while Dorothy simply described such back-up services:

> I do errands, pick up parts, help move animals. Today I sold a cow for him because he wasn't here.

Paige preferred to identify herself as a 'Girl Friday':

> I just do what is necessary. I'm the Girl Friday. I do the payroll, book-keeping and record keeping.

Regardless of whether or not they labelled themselves in such a fashion, all of the wives in my study provide some back-up services to their husbands. Some women get paid for this work, others do not. But they all described such work as part of their everyday activities — especially answering the telephone. Finch argues telephone answering is one way wives are drawn into their husbands' work:

> Wives are also likely to have contributions elicited if their husbands' job involves a certain amount of 'women's work' which can be conveniently siphoned off, or if his job is greatly facilitated by having someone with whom a message can be left at any time (Finch, 1983: 131).

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[12] True, 'gopher' means a burrowing animal or to mine in a small way; but farm wives use it to refer to the way they are called upon to 'go-for' parts and run errands which in American English is pronounced 'gophers'.

Cooper (1989: 170), however, warns we must beware of placing too much emphasis on the importance of such "myriad mundane activities that women do". She argues we can not easily ascertain whether or not women answer phones and greet callers because they are simply in the house or whether they are in the house precisely to answer the phone and greet callers. She cautions:

> The implication is that the woman who answers the phone does so as the one responsible for farm business administration, or that she shares some such responsibility. The fact that the woman is the adult most frequently alone in the house and therefore most likely to be the one taking various calls is not mentioned (Cooper, 1989: 170).

But Cooper's position does not appreciate that farm related business calls are being directed into the family household, thereby drawing wives into farm operations. Daphne told me:

> I'd love to take the phone off the hook. But I don't know when I'll be called on for something — for my in-laws or for the farm.

Being called upon to answer the phone is at least an unintended, if not an intended, consequence of household based production. Before recent phone innovations, how was one to know if the call would be family or business oriented? New caller display phones allow women to see the number the call is originating from which means, if they have this technology, they can be more discerning in their phone answering. Barbara told me she can now decide whether or not she will answer the phone or let the answering machine take business calls after her 9 to 12 'office hours'. Kelly also admitted using this device to determine whether or not phone calls were farm or family related. Another alternative is to install a phone line devoted to the farm enterprise. This latter option has relieved Penny of endless phone answering:

> The phone was a constant interruption. It seemed like you had to answer it every five minutes. Now we have a farm business line and a fax line. Plus my husband now has a cellular phone. He can deal with things which has lowered my stress level. I don't have to take a message. I can just leave it to the answering machine.

Cooper's position also overlooks how back up services can draw wives deeper into the operation of the farm. Pearl recalled:

> I was the person here when people called with questions so I had to deal with things — that's how I've ended up taking on so much.

Moreover, Cooper underestimates other ways farm wives are drawn into the farm operation.

Changes to the matrimonial property act in Canada and New Brunswick prompted banks and lending institutions to have wives co-sign for farm loans. Since wives now have claim to property and capital accumulated during marriage, banks wanted to ensure wives would not be able to shelter the 'family' farm from repossession in the case of bad debts or bankruptcy. Three-quarters of the women had, at one point or another, co-signed for a farm loan which does implicate them in 'farm business administration'. Peggy's comments are reflective of almost half the women in my study:

> I have never been involved in loan negotiations. But before the changes in the matrimonial laws, husbands could sign it (the farm) all away. Now the wife also has to sign it all away too. The bank wants to be able to make a quick sale to get their money back if you default. I felt I had no choice but to sign. The bank's loan officer and my brother-in-law came here to get my signature. 'What was I to do?' Any contrary decision was effectively annulled. You end up signing everything away into perpetuity.

Diametrically opposite are the five women — Dorothy, Dotty, Dayle, Pamela and Priscilla — who report negotiating loans for the farm and then having their husbands come and sign them. In effect, they are delegated this task which requires them to work by proxy for their husbands. Dayle does this work even though she doesn't always approve of her husband and son's decision to borrow money:

> I go to negotiate loans with the bank. Sometimes I am not in favour of what they want me to do. For instance a few months ago they decided we should expand our operation. I did what they wanted but I wasn't really in favour of it. I didn't like it.

For Priscilla farm loan negotiations were more reflective of her back-up services:

> I do most of the communication work with the banker. It takes a lot of planning. Each year we have an operating loan and you need to have good records. So I do it.

Another way some farm wives work by proxy for their husbands is through attending farm meetings on their farm and husband's behalf. For instance, Debbie and Diane, who both went to agricultural school, both represent their farms at field crop and dairy meetings. Diane indicated this was quite unusual but she also identified herself as a "full-time farmer". Pamela also acts on behalf of their family farm at numerous farm related meetings.

Farm wives not only provide back-up services and work by proxy for their husbands but two-thirds regularly work alongside their husband in the farm's commodity production. For example, Paige confided:

> It would cost us more if I stopped doing what I do. It would take at least two people to replace me; and I'm convenient. I'm here when the day starts and ends.

Paige works with her husband from dawn to dusk. Delia, on the other hand, is very clear farming is not her chosen occupation:

> This is my husband's life. I love being on the farm, but full partnership is not for me. I am a full-time partner in the marriage but I am not a business partner. It's not a profession for me.

Yet at the same time, she has taken over milking on several occasions. This concurs with Finch's position wives work instead of their husbands when he is absent or at times of crisis. Delia revealed:

> The first time my husband was hospitalised for a week and I had to take over. I knew the technology but I didn't know the cows. It was really hard. Now I do the milking when I'm required — when my husband's away, when there's an emergency and in the summer when he's tending the field crops. I've had to do everything from delivering cows, to feeding, to milking. I've become a casual worker on the farm. I'm on call all the time now.

Through responding to a crisis, Delia has become a bonafide 'additional worker' who is drawn into her husband's work on a regular basis.

Only four women, Penny, Pearl, Danielle and Peggy did not report doing work in the fields or barn. Even then, Danielle admitted:

> I have spent a half hour or so spreading manure and using the harvester just so I could do it if I had to.

Danielle and Pearl are, in fact, both doing the same type of work as their husbands. Both report their husbands are engaged more in farm management than farm labour. Danielle disclosed:

> Since we doubled in size two years ago we have two full-time herdsmen. My husband manages the farm and does field work. He doesn't do barn work, he wouldn't go help the hired help.

Implicit in her comments were why would she be doing barn work, if her husband wasn't? She has learned to use the field equipment so she can do her husband's field work if necessary and she reported that she keeps "aware of the issues and reads up on things" — work which is reflective of management tasks. Likewise Pearl's husband acts as a manager. They have four full time farm employees, one of whom is a foreman, and sixteen additional 'seasonal' employees who in the fall work in the potato harvest and in the farm's value-added business during the winter months. Her job of proposal writing, farm development and office management mirrors her husband's job. Penny, on the other hand, does appear to be less involved in her husband's farm work. However, their farm is also in a rather unique position since the

farm fields currently in operation are four hours driving distant from the family household; and they still have pre-school children at home; so her husband commutes to and from the potato fields between the spring and fall of each year. Peggy, on the other hand, has full-time, off farm employment and her farm is an intragenerational operation which as we will see in the next section has implications for farm wives' work. As I will explore in more detail in Chapter Five, the more common practice is for women to be highly involved in their husbands' work by working alongside them.

While there is variation in the farm work done by wives and the extent of their involvement in farm production, I found they are all taking primary responsibility for domestic labour and child care. Delphy and Leonard (1994: 160) maintain "... it is men who are self-employed who most rely on their wives — who leave them to do the domestic work single-handedly". This would certainly appear to be the case among the farm wives in my study. Farmers are among the 'self-employed' and two-thirds of the farm wives I interviewed were single-handedly doing laundry, cooking, cleaning and raising their children.

Finch (1983: 28) further argues wives take on domestic work so husbands are able to concentrate on their careers without disturbance:

> A wife who sees work taking over her husband's whole life, and who endorses the legitimacy of its claims upon him, may well respond by taking on all responsibility for domestic tasks, leaving him free to concentrate on his work.

Some farm wives in my study would indeed appear to accept primary responsibility for the household as a means of endorsing their husbands' farm work, as Finch suggests. For example, Perdita told me:

> I pretty much do the household thing. Two years ago we built a new house; and I did everything. I dealt with the contractors, I did the sanding, painting, wallpapering. My husband was too busy planting.

Pearl disclosed:

> I am in charge of the household finances, the cooking, cleaning, laundry, the grocery shopping — all the household stuff. Wherever I am the children are with me. The farm is my husband's baby. He has left the responsibility of the children and household to me.

Without exception women identified the family household and child care as their responsibility even when their husbands helped. For example, Peggy indicated:

> My husband helps with meals and this winter he's been picking our children up from after school activities. I do the laundry, the grocery shopping and the cleaning. It's me who does the nagging to get them to clean.

Only seven women[13], in fact, reported their husbands helped with household tasks on a regular basis. Amongst these women only three — Peggy, Paige and Delia — described their husbands as habitually participating in child care; and then fathers were more likely to transport their children to and from extracurricular activities than monitor school work. Like Peggy's husband, most husbands helped by cooking meals rather than doing laundry or household cleaning. Dotty's comments were reflective of other women who received domestic help from their husbands:

> My husband loves to cook. He gets his own meals most of the time. He can put a meal on. He wouldn't expect me to do all the cooking even if I'm here. I usually do the cleaning up; he can do it and does at times. But I usually do it.

Dayle's husband will help with cooking but she needs "to ask him". Peggy's husband, as well as Paige's husband, makes bread. Donna's husband started helping with household tasks when she began working off the farm; before that she did all the household work. Interestingly, Daisy's husband stopped helping with domestic work when she stopped working off the farm:

> I go to the barn in the morning and then I come in and get my daughter ready for school before going back out and finishing up. I do all the household work. My husband used to help. He would do the cooking. But he doesn't do any household work now that I don't work off the farm.

However, not all the women who worked off the farm were receiving domestic help. It appears to have more to do with individual couples and their perceptions of and acquiescence to stereotypical gender roles. For example, some women told me their husbands expected their meals on the table when they arrived — and they ultimately comply by having meals ready. Dawn elucidated this point:

> My husband believes a woman's place is in the home. He wants his supper on the table when he comes in.

Danielle agreed:

> My husband is old fashioned. He comes in for his meals and he likes them on the table when he arrives.

More frequently wives attributed their husbands' lack of participation to his lack of time which would support Finch's position wives take on domestic responsibilities so husbands can concentrate on their work.

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[13] These women were Peggy, Paige, Dayle, Donna, Dotty, Dixie and Delia.

Even when wives are active in their husbands' farm production work, their husbands do not tend to reciprocate by participating in household labour. For instance, Priscilla told me:

> My husband does not help with the kitchen, laundry, household cleaning or anything like that. He doesn't have time to. Sometimes things can get pretty slap happy when things get hectic. You think, 'what's for dinner?' Everyone expects you to do it even though you're working in the fields too. It's considered women's work.

Denise also reflected on the expectation that she would come in and cook the family's meals after a day of farm work:

> I did a lot more than somebody would who was being paid to work here. No worker would be foolish enough to do what I did. They wouldn't work the length of day I did then come in and get dinner ready.

In short, regardless of their other work, farm wives are primarily responsible for the family household and the reproductive labour which occurs within it. Like all wives, farm wives find themselves working for their families for no pay as a 'labour of love'. It should be remembered when these same tasks are done in the formal economy as paid work there is no doubt about their productive character. But when this same work is done in family households for no pay it is defined as reproductive labour.

Not only do farm wives ubiquitously take responsibility for household tasks, they often find themselves doing more of this work than urban and rural nonfarm housewives[14]. First, there is more of this work to do. Secondly, they have more opportunities to produce raw materials and engage in home production. Thirdly, their family households are located farther away from services such as banks, shopping centres, employment opportunities and leisure facilities necessitating more travel time. Gasson and Errington (1993: 167) make all of these points when they write:

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[14] Few researchers have compared farm wives' domestic labour with other housewives. However, one such study is the one done by Reimer; and he concluded "farm households have a higher level of production of household goods than nonfarm households" (1985: 151). Since he was comparing rural farm and non-farm households we can surmise urban households who have less access to farm land and are closer to urban centres are doing less of this work. McKinley-Wright (1995) also provides a study of rural women's experiences which spans both farm and nonfarm households. But, she does not directly address the differences between farm and nonfarm households as Reimer does. Smith (1992:170) argues researchers have been less interested in farm women's domestic labour because: "One, domestic work is common to all households, farm and non-farm alike, even if there is reason — and some evidence — to believe it is greater in terms of hours in farm households. Two, courts have typically not looked to domestic labour as a form of contribution to household operation, until recently. Three, another, principal, explanation is undoubtedly that data concerning household or domestic work are not routinely collected at the national level."

> Farm work is hard on clothes, necessitating much washing and mending. Farmhouses are likely to be large and old, demanding more upkeep and repair than the average home. The garden may be large too, and farm women typically produce, process and preserve more food than the average housewife. Rural living adds to the time spent shopping, transporting children, transacting business and running errands.

All of these features emerged in my interviews.

Eleven women reported mending as an ongoing and dreaded task. Comments like Patricia's, "I darn socks but I really hate that job", were common. Dixie elaborated:

> I hated darning socks with a passion. My husband wanted me to mend his socks. He thought I should provide an on-site repair shop.

In Peggy's opinion, "mending is a drudgery but sewing is not". Pearl would agree since she told me, "I'd rather sew something new. But if it is a favourite item or fairly new I will mend it". Overall twenty-three women reported sewing clothes, knitting, quilting and doing needlework on a regular basis. Nineteen have turned this work into gifts for Christmas, birthdays, weddings and other special occasions. As Debra explained:

> It's a fun thing and a savings thing to sew and make crafts and give them as gifts.

Deirdre hooks rugs with the children's old clothing and makes quilts for wedding presents. Priscilla and Paige give home-made pickles and jams as gifts. Not everybody appreciates such efforts, Phoebe, who sees such work as a means to save money in the long run, recalled how her mother-in-law told her "I don't need anything more to hang on my walls". Nevertheless, evidence of this work was very visible in many of the farm households I visited: needlework of all sorts adorned the walls, afghans and quilts graced the backs of sofas and home-made curtains hung at the windows. Reimer (1986: 152) also found such household production to be higher in rural farm households than nonfarm households:

> Farm households produce a higher proportion of drapes, clothing, rugs and baked goods, all products that do not require resources likely to be unique to farm households.

The majority of women in my study reported they regularly did house repairs, painting and wallpapering. They would only contract out major household renovations, and then only if they didn't feel they had the expertise or the time to do it themselves. In general only rough carpentry would be contracted out leaving wives to do the finishing work Perdita described earlier. Dolly admitted, "What I can do, I do myself. Even now I lay new floors, I do all the woodworking, painting and wallpapering in the house myself". Her approach was echoed by many other women.

All of them have initiated some improvements in their farm homesteads. Some, like Barbara, have completely remodelled the original farm house; others, like Danielle, are still 'waiting their turn':

> This house is falling apart. But we've been expanding the farm. The last time we put money into expansion, I said, 'the next time it's my turn, the money should go towards the house'.

Many of these farm houses are also heated with wood which requires a constant vigil to keep the fire going. Eleven women reported stoking the fire as part of their daily routine. Denise, Daisy and Paige not only stoke the fire but they also go to the woods, cut and delimb the trees with their husbands. Once the firewood is in the farmyard, they split, pile and carry it into the woodshed and later carry it into the household during the winter months for burning. Dolly found stoking the wood stoves quite stressful since she wasn't used to it. She indicated not only was it a lot of work but they had three flue fires which eventually prompted them to convert the house to electric heat.

Another component which leaves farm wives with a heavier work load is the presence of children. Pamela Smith (1987: 145) indicates farm women in Canada have

Table 4.7 : Number of Children in Interviewees' Family

#Children	Potatoes	Dairy	Both	Total
none	0	0	0	0
one	0	0	0	0
two	3	4	0	7
three	5	5	1	11
four	3	5	0	8
five	1	2	1	4
6 or more	0	0	0	0
Total	12	16	2	30

had and continue to have more children than their urban counterparts though the difference between the two groups is declining. As Table 4.7 shows, all the women in my study had at least two children. The bigger the family household, the more cooking, cleaning and laundry there is to be done. Many farm wives reported baking regularly including making bread. According to Daphne, "home-made bread stays with you better" than bought bread. The implication being, farming is a physically demanding occupation requiring hearty meals — especially during peak work periods.

Child care, too, occupies a considerable amount of farm wives' time. There are few formal day care facilities available to the rural and farm population. To participate in such programs, farm wives must often drive their children considerable distances. Additionally, older children must be transported to and from extracurricular activities if they are going to be able to partake in such events. Driving children back and forth generally falls within the realm of child care, and half the farm wives in my study have ended up spending considerable amounts of time taxiing their children. Phoebe contends the children's activities are thus a family affair:

> The children's activities are a family thing, as well as a personal decision on their part, because you have to commit your time to running them here and there.

Diane is strongly committed to driving her five children to extracurricular activities:

> My children are not going to be penalised because they live on a farm in a rural area. Every night I am driving somebody to something. They are active in local activities and I drive them to the city to take music, swimming and dancing lessons.

The other half have limited their children's activities. Paula confided:

> I drive them but it's too hectic for them to be involved in many things. We have minimised their involvement.

Peggy added:

> The children would like to be more involved in school sports but we live too far from town to make it plausible.

Besides transporting their children to activities, the majority of the farm wives in my study also oversaw homework and spoke to the children's teachers. Three volunteered it was they who took their children to doctor's appointments.

Farm wives also tend to incorporate child care into other work activities. Gasson and Errington (1993: 166) claim "wives are restricted to jobs they can do with child in tow." While child care is no doubt a major facet of their lives farm wives continue to do an extensive amount of work. For example, women frequently described taking their children to the barn or fields with them. Dolly's approach to child care is very illustrative of others in my study:

> When they were pre-schoolers I took the children to the barn with me when I went to feed the calves. I take them all to the barn with me now, all to the store with me. Wherever I am I have the children with me.

Domestic work done inside the family household can, however, extend beyond one's immediate nuclear family. Farm wives can, for example, be supplying

household services to boarders or extended family members. For this reason, Whatmore (1991) insists a distinction must be made between kinship relations and household composition. Seven farm wives in my study had, in fact, at one time or another cooked, cleaned and done laundry for farm help who lived with them. Such household labour was generally considered part of the workers pay packet. As Denise explained:

> They weren't paying boarders. They didn't pay me. The meals and room we gave them and the laundry I did was part of their pay.

Among my respondents, Posy had done this work for the longest period:

> We had a hired man live with us for seven years. I did his meals and washing. It was just part of the farm work.

Three others told me their mothers and mother-in-laws had regularly done such work "as part of the workers' wages". Apart from feeding boarders, half the women also routinely fed workers. So it would be an error to assume household labour was being done solely for one's immediate nuclear family.

Farm wives also find themselves engaged in more domestic labour because they have better access to the materials needed for gardening and small animal raising than urban households. Two-thirds of the farm wives in my study grew large vegetable gardens. Half of them produced other foodstuffs like eggs, chicken and beef. In other words, farm wives are more readily able to produce raw materials. They in turn transform these raw materials through 'cottage industry' into value-added food products for their family's consumption. Twenty-eight of the thirty women, even those who didn't grow their own gardens, reported freezing substantial quantities of vegetables. Half the women indicated they try to freeze enough food to meet all of their family's food requirements during the winter months. Daisy, for instance, told me "I try to freeze all we need"; while Patricia elaborated:

> I keep a garden. I buy the seed and my husband plants it, I weed it and take it out. I freeze enough to last the whole winter. We don't buy much, it saves dollars and cents to do it yourself.

Dolly further elucidated:

> I like to make butter and cheese with extra milk. I make yoghurt two or three times a week. It's quite expensive to buy these things in the store. I keep chickens and hens and a garden. I start my own seedlings. I love it. I like to work in the garden and it's nice to grow your own vegetables yourself. I freeze enough vegetables to do us the whole year. In many ways we are self-sufficient.

Paige doesn't grow her own garden but she does self provisioning:

> I buy vegetables from a neighbour. We have our own strawberry patch — and I make jam, pies and freeze berries and apples. I freeze vegetables too but I'm too busy in the summer to grow a garden; and I have to have all my freezing done before we start digging.

As the farm wives themselves point out their primary production, i.e. of raw materials, and their secondary production, i.e. food processing and preparation, reduces family expenses. Other researchers like Reimer (1986) and Ghorayshi (1989) also make this point. Ghorayshi (1989: 576) contends household production "allows the family to save money, thereby reducing somewhat the economic pressures".

Even consuming and buying supplies can take more time for rural farm wives than for urban housewives because they have to travel to urban centres to purchase products at competitive prices. Local rural stores tend to have less selection at higher prices. One-third of the women in my study routinely travelled to larger urban centres in pursuit of lower prices and better selection. Priscilla told me, "I am a 'specials' shopper. I get the flyers, see where the bargains are and then go shopping". Perdita concurred:

> I don't usually buy much unless it's on sale. I shop around to get the best deals that's why I go to Fredericton [the provincial captial] every month.

Phyllis agreed: "I shop around for things. I'll travel further to get things". Paige also confided she doesn't "believe in paying full price for things", she "plans around the flyers". Some women, like Pamela and Diane, do comparison shopping and obtain at least three quotes before making a household or farm purchase. Pamela elucidated:

> I do comparison shopping. If we need to buy a box of spikes I make at least three phone calls to find out what businesses are charging. I look for the best deals.

Diane indicated she wouldn't hesitate to dicker with local merchants over prices to reduce farm and household expenses as well as her travelling time. As you may have noted, most of these comments are from women on potato farms where, as we will see in the next chapter, cash flow is precarious and uncertain in comparison to dairy farms.

While the majority of the women in my study perform all domestic tasks themselves, four have hired household assistance. Barbara, Penny and Delia all have cleaners. Barbara's housekeeper comes once a week. Penny and Delia have a person coming in once every two weeks. Diane has a full-time housekeeper during the spring

and summer months when she is especially busy doing field work and being "a full-time farmer".

According to Delphy and Leonard (1994: 160-161) it is only when women have too much household work to do themselves or when their husbands want their work to be placed elsewhere do they have servants. Penny, Delia and Diane all fell into the category of too much housework given their other activities. As Delia explained:

> I am not here all the time to do housework. It would mean burning the candle further or expecting more from my husband and the children. It could be done but it would be a lot harder without our housekeeper.

Barbara, on the other hand, best reflects the second scenario of having a housekeeper when your husband wants your work diverted elsewhere. She first hired a housekeeper when she began working in the farm office — located off the family kitchen — every morning of the week. So her work certainly was being directed elsewhere even though she herself continued to be situated in the family household.

However, Delphy and Leonard do not address who is paying the wages of these servants. In my study I found Barbara, Penny and Delia paid household cleaners from their earnings. Earning their own money enabled these women to feel confident enough to divert some of the household budget into a housekeeper who would come on a weekly or biweekly basis. Penny made this point most clearly:

> Since my third child [she has four children], I've had a person who helps clean. She comes every two weeks. It's really worth it to me. I can teach enough to justify paying her. I'm taking money out to pay for it but I'm putting money back in. It was my choice. I wanted it to guard my sanity. My husband doesn't have time to help so he supported it.

Obviously with cash generating activities added to the list of work farm wives do, their work load increased. But that it was only when they were earning their own cash they sought domestic help suggests women were unwilling or unable to take money from the 'family' farm operation. That women were using their earnings to pay for domestic help is further proof they feel primarily responsible for the domestic work — even when they are not doing it themselves, it is their earned income which is paying for this help. In Diane's case, it was not her earnings precisely which pay for the full-time housekeeper. However, it would cost the farm more to hire people to replace her farm labour than it is costing to replace her household labour. Therefore, they have opted for a full-time housekeeper. Farm wives generally though are expected to take primary responsibility for domestic labour regardless of any other work they may do.

This is a point Whatmore also makes when she discusses farm wives' work. According to Whatmore (1991b: 87) farm wives' work has three distinctive features. First, farm wives have primary or sole responsibility for the family household. Secondly, farm wives' work is responsive rather than initiatory or self-determined. Thirdly, farm wives' work is characterised by the simultaneous performance of several tasks associated with women's multiple roles as wife, mother and reserve farm labour.

My study completely supports her first finding. I would, however, disagree with the second feature since it would appear to be more reflective of wives involvement in farm activities rather than a feature of all their work. Some farm wives, like Daphne, are very clear about what they will and will not do:

> I take an interest in the barn rather than fieldwork. Being in the barn gives me a better understanding of the farm. I'm not into fieldwork. Though sometimes it would come in handy if I did that kind of thing. I've set my limit as to what I'll do.

Diane, on the other hand, is extremely active in fieldwork on her farm:

> I plan all the field crops. I spend most of the spring and summer on the tractor. Only I can spray the crops because I have my farm licence to spray chemicals but my husband doesn't.

Both of these farm wives have taken part in determining the work they will and will not do. Recall how Penny is not 'very interested' in farm work and subsequently does very little of this work. However, she does teach music — work which she, not her husband initiated. Other examples abound in my interviews where women actively pursue some work and avoid others. Dotty, for example, confided:

> The more you learn to do, the more you are required to do. Therefore, I avoid things. For instance, I'd rather be in the barn than on machinery. So I won't learn how to use certain equipment. I can always find something else to do which keeps me from having to do it.

Whatmore's position underestimates wives' efforts to avoid and resist certain work; as well as their active pursuit of work they enjoy but of which their husbands may not approve. For example, Delphy and Leonard (1994: 164) believe: "there are...cases where husbands put down their wives' jobs and voluntary activities systematically". In my case study, some wives, including Barbara, indicated their husbands did not approve of the amount of time they spent supporting community endeavours. Yet these women continue to do such work despite their husbands' disapproval.

On the other hand, farm wives often do find themselves responding to the labour needs of the farm. Whatmore's second and third features are indicative of farm wives' ability to respond to situations and to do what is needed in the farm's commodity

production. In fact, her third point really acknowledges the way farm wives are doing domestic work at the same time they are doing farm work — which frequently means 'doing work with children in tow'. It is perhaps more accurate to see farm wives as flexible, rather than simply responsive, workers. A perspective which Ghorayshi (1989: 574-575) develops:

> Wives must do whatever is necessary to prevent delays in production... Responding to the unpredictable exigencies of farm production requires flexible workers; wives are such workers.

Sachs (1996: 125), too, argues farm wives are a reserve army of labour to be mobilised when labour is necessary. They are 'on-call' to fill in and take over when farm production requires their efforts. Gasson and Errington (1993: 149-150) also see the farm wife as a flexible worker, she "...fills in when regular workers are absent, provides an extra pair of hands at busy times or in emergencies, tidies up, collects essential parts..." (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 149-150). Resoundingly the women in New Brunswick recalled not only doing such tasks but making themselves available for such tasks. A point we will explore further in Chapter Five.

III. 'FAMILY' FARMING

Life as a farm wife not only draws women into farm production in a variety of ways but it also forces them to deal with family relations on an ongoing basis. Family farming encompasses family relations by virtue of requiring family labour. As a result, few researchers have ignored the family in their analysis and discussion of farm women's work. However, there has been what I would consider a mistaken acceptance in this literature that the 'family' in family farming is a nuclear family; and that kinship relations are harmonious ones. From my perspective, kinship should not presuppose conflict free relations or an equal vision and commitment to the family farm[15]. My interviews contain several instances of wives dealing with contentious relationships with mother-in-laws or sister-in-laws, siblings who have 'economically joined households' in their family farm enterprises no longer seeing 'eye to eye', and children's visions of farming differing from their parents.

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[15] Delphy and Leonard (1985) point out even though people may be living in the same family household, they may not be experiencing life in the same way. Resources are not usually allocated evenly within families which means inequality exists within families not just between them. They take the example of inheritance, where the eldest son usually inherits the farm. Unequal resource allocation through inheritance will mean he, by an accident of birth, will inherit the father's class position whereas siblings may or may not depending upon the availability of other resources. While this is an important issue and one where conflicts may easily emerge, it is not directly addressed in this thesis.

This section investigates the presence of nuclear and extended family structures on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada and the consequences of these different family compositions for farm wives' work. It then looks at how farm wives are often required to resolve conflict and act as tension managers in sometimes complex family-work relations. Such 'emotional' work is often overlooked in studies of farm women because it is intangible and difficult to measure — yet essential for good working relations. The section concludes by considering the occupational health and safety problems of farming and how they directly impact on the farm family who lives, works and plays on the farm property. In short, this section considers the range and type of work which is required to keep the 'family' in farming.

A. Extended and nuclear families

The overall assumption has been we are dealing with nuclear families. Even though, in the literature, there is an acknowledgement there will be moments of transition on family farms as one generation retires and the next generation takes over. Passing the farm from one generation to the next is perceived as a short-term, temporary stage in the natural progression. It is not discussed as the *modus operandi* of family farms. The 'family farm business cycle' approach assumes two things: one, there is only one chosen successor — even Delphy and Leonard (1985, 1992) present this as being the case in France — and other family members will be displaced or carry on working for the new 'owner'; and two, one 'nuclear' family or household can run an economically viable farm enterprise. It overlooks the ways families can 'bind' together — to share equipment, resources and labour — in order to allow more than one nuclear family to stay in farming. A reality Gasson *et. al.* (1988: 9) hint at but don't pursue when they write:

> A family may join several households as where economically co-operating siblings live separately, a common occurrence in British agriculture.

My data suggests nuclear family farms are only one among many family structures in New Brunswick, Canada.

The presence of varying family structures means farm wives must not only deal with their immediate nuclear families but with a much wider kinship network, as illustrated in Table 4.8. Twelve of the family farms in my case study, seven potato and five dairy, are intergenerational family farms. Nine of these involved husbands working with sons, one comprised a husband working with his father, one husband worked with his wife's father and one widowed wife was working with her father and mother-in-law. A further eight farms — four in each commodity sector — had been

inter/intra generational and were now nuclear family operations. Two farms continued to be intragenerational: the potato farm combined the family households of two brothers while the dairy farm combined the family households of three brothers. Both of these intragenerational farm operations had evolved from inter/intra generational farms into intragenerational farms when their husbands' fathers retired from farming. One potato farm in my study continued to be inter/intra generational with a husband and two sons farming together. Only seven of the thirty farms — less than one-quarter — had always been nuclear family farm operations. Most of these 'always nuclear' operations were first generation dairy farms.

Table 4.8: Family Composition of Family Farms

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Intergenerational (Husband/son)	6	3	9
Intergenerational (husband/ his father)	0	1	1
Intergenerational (husband/wife's father)	1	0	1
Intergenerational (widowed wife with in-laws)	0	1	1
Intragenerational (Brothers)	1	1	2
Inter/ Intra generational (Husband/sons)	1	0	1
Nuclear now/ was other	4	4	8
Always Nuclear	1	6	7
Total	14	16	30

Overall, in my sample, dairy farms were more likely to be 'nuclear' operations than potato farms. Six dairy farms had always been nuclear family operations while four were nuclear operations now even though they had not been in the past. By comparison, potato farms tend to be more 'extended' family operations. Only one potato farm — Paige's — was and had always been farmed by just their nuclear family. Paige's farm also had the second smallest acreage in production among the potato farms. The difference in family composition between dairy and potato farms is

Table 4.9: The Generation of Family Farms

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
1st Generation	3	7	10
2nd Generation	3	4	7
3rd Generation	5	1	6
4th Generation	2	1	3
5th Generation	0	1	1
6th Generation	1	0	1
7th Generation	0	2	2
Total	14	16	30

in part reflective of differences in the two industries. Also, as Table 4.9 indicates, my sample has more potato farms than dairy farms spanning more than one generation.

Farms which have been in existence for more than one generation have a greater potential to be intergenerational than a first generation farm. As soon as a farm passes from one generation to the next, there can be more than one heir-apparent which can lead to intragenerational farms or inter/intra-generational farms as succession comes to span a decade or more. Many of the women on the farms which are now nuclear but were intergenerational operations indicated their father-in-laws still worked on the farm during peak periods even though they are no longer the owner-operators. Peggy, for instance, told me, "my father-in-law still helps every year with the planting and harvesting". Daphne's father-in-law can be relied on to help with milking on the few days of the month she works off the farm. Pearl's father-in-law has taken over going for parts, so she no longer has to interrupt what she is doing, to keep production on course:

> I used to go a lot for parts and sometimes now I still do. But this is where my father-in-law has found his niche. He price checks and spends the time chasing down equipment parts.

Retired father-in-laws are knowledgeable about the farm and they have a vested interest in seeing it continue to succeed. The presence of extended family members available to work on the farm can free women and other nuclear family members from being the sole source of a reserve army of labour, on call, to work.

As the family composition and available family labour changes on the farm, farm wives can experience changes in their work. This can occur in two ways: one, wives can find themselves doing less as family labour expands; conversely, wives can find themselves doing more as family labour contracts. Both instances were present in my data. Patricia provides an example of the first instance:

> I always did farm work, but since my son came into the picture, I'm out. My daughter worked on the harvester which is another reason I got pushed out, somebody has to get meals.

Phyllis, too, indicated she does "less outside work" since her two sons started working on the farm. Dayle made the same point:

> I used to go to the barn until my son started working with us. Now I go if my son is ill or away.

Since Dayle's son started working on the farm she has also been able to pursue volunteer work and to participate in paid consultation work — activities she did not have time to engage in when she was responsible for daily milking.

On the other hand, farm wives can find themselves taking on more work as the farm shifts from an extended to a nuclear operation. For example, Perdita admits:

> Prior to us taking over the farm [her husband worked with his parents] I did nothing. I had nothing to do with any of it. His mom did the books. Now I do the books, I pay the bills. I have the running around the bills entail.

Deirdre's farm is in the process of shifting from an intergenerational to a nuclear family operation, after twenty years of being a father-son 'family' farm. According to her, "we are phasing out my father-in-law and phasing me in" which will have real consequences for the work she does:

> When my father-in-law leaves, it'll be me I'm sure who ends up taking on the work he's currently doing. I'm included in farm discussions. We've been having meetings for about the last two years.

Deirdre would like to set up her own business but she identified herself as the one who would end up taking over her father- and mother- in-laws work because "I am here doing nothing so to speak so why should my husband pay somebody else, when I can do it?" Her mother-in-law currently does the book-keeping with her husband but she also sees herself taking on this job eventually. Daphne also described herself as "taking her father-in-law's place. He used to do the book-keeping but now that he's retired, I do it. And I do more barn work now that he has retired."

Several women in my study — Pamela, Phyllis, Posy, Priscilla and Dotty — have bridged both scenarios. They took over farms from their parents and now their sons are working for them. As their parents or father-in-law left farming, they found themselves doing more. For instance, Dotty revealed:

> I gradually worked my way into full-time work on the farm. I sort of just took my father-in-law's place over time.

Now as their sons enter into farming, they find their work changing again to accommodate an additional worker. For some, like Phyllis, there is less farm work. For others, like Pamela and Posy, farm work can be just as prevalent since they expanded their farms to support an additional family member. As well, Pamela, Phyllis and Dotty find themselves once again dealing with child care as they look after

grandchildren while their sons work on the farm and their daughter-in-laws pursue off farm employment.

In short, my case study data indicates 'extended family' farms are more common and enduring in New Brunswick than the literature on family life cycles and farm business cycles would suggest. Even though seven farms had always been nuclear family enterprises and eight farms had transitioned from extended to nuclear operations, five of the farms have linked two or more nuclear households since their inception while most of the husband/son enterprises were at one time husband/father operations. The intragenerational farms conjoin the assets and labour of multiple family households of siblings into the operation of a single farm. This persistence of extended family operations forces farm wives to work with parents-in-law, sisters and brothers-in-law and nieces and nephews; or male farmer's to deal with the equivalent relations if the family farm was inherited or set up through the wife's connections to farming — which was the case in three of my interviews. In this latter case, wives can be forced to negotiate between their relatives and their husband when conflict or disagreements arise. In the former case, husbands can also feel caught between their extended and nuclear families (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 172).

B. Maintaining 'family' relations

Since 'family' farms require family labour, family members often find themselves working together. In nuclear family farms, one can not escape the family by going to work neither can one escape from work by going 'home' to the family. The two are geographically and socially intertwined. For farm wives, the close proximity of work and home frequently requires them to negotiate between family and farm interests. As Ghorayshi (1989: 578) notes:

> In their roles as wife/mother/administrator, they have to establish priorities, solve family conflicts, and make sure the interests of both family and enterprise are taken into account.

Such work can be even more difficult on extended 'family' farms where farm wives find themselves negotiating amongst a more complex and varied set of social relations.

Conflicts amongst the farm family can threaten the vitality of the farm enterprise. Consequently farm wives find themselves in the roles of tension managers and mediators in order to resolve family strife; since as Gasson and Errington (1993: 179) point out: "beyond a certain point family discord may destroy the enterprise and vice versa". Additionally, farm wives are routinely required to manage family stress and to

keep emotional and financial anxieties in check. For as Leda Jensen (1982: 11) explicates family farming is a high-pressure occupation:

> Many do not realize the pressures on the farm family unit and the problems of coping with life on the farm....The economic pressure, the decision-making, the high seasonal work loads, mounting restrictions, increasing paperwork, family conflicts and excessive off-farm activities are all stress factors. Farming has evolved from a largely physical occupation into one that requires more mental and emotional input; it is a lonely, high-pressure job.

Resolving family conflicts and reducing family stress are jobs which tend to fall to farm wives. Such emotional work[16] is being recognised more and more as an important component of farm wives' work (D. Smith, 1979; P. Smith, 1987; Ghorayshi 1989; Gasson and Errington, 1993; Delphy and Leonard, 1994; Alston, 1995; Sachs, 1996). This section explores how farm wives cope with family conflict and stress.

A certain amount of stress was present amongst all my respondents. All of the women, for instance, discussed financial pressures and the difficulties of allocating resources between the farm enterprise and the family household. In Ghorayshi's opinion:

> The important task of allocation is an on-going process of collaboration, conflict and tension-management in which the individual needs of the household must be deferred, granted or subordinated (1989: 577).

The farm wives in my study were very aware of the financial interconnections between the family and farm domains and the pressures which arose from trying to strike a balance between the two. For example, Penny related:

> There's a lot of financial stress, cash flow problems. The bills are here but the money isn't coming in from the crop. The farm has had to take priority in order to keep it going. I'm still waiting for the day to do more with the house.

Danielle also reflected on this dilemma:

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[16] Leslie Bella argues women's emotional work has been largely neglected because of its pervasive yet intangible character. She writes: "Most studies of domestic labour have focused on the tangible chores associated with the homemaker role — cooking, cleaning, shopping, changing diapers, supervising children, transporting children to community events, and so on. This form of domestic labour is easier to observe and to report than the more intangible forms of labour involved in securing the emotional well-being of family members....Women secure the emotional well-being of family members by making relationships and caring central in all they do for and with families..." (Bella, 1992: 13).

> When you make purchases you're very aware the money's ultimately coming from the farm account. There's the flexibility to get money from the farm for extras but you don't abuse it because you know the farm finances.

For Pamela juggling farm and family finances means:

> The money's not there to pay everyone what they're worth. You end up getting paid a salary for a quarter of what you're worth, really we get a living allowance. We're always examining every purchase. You end up robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Besides coping with the stresses of financial pressures, farm wives find themselves mediating family conflicts.

Seven farm wives — Barbara, Dayle, Dotty, Phoebe, Debra, Peggy and Debbie — were willing to disclose the presence of family conflicts which they felt caught up in. Interestingly, all of these women are on intergenerational or intragenerational family farms. The conflict in Barbara's family has become so intense they have hired a consultant to help mediate the family conflict. Barbara told me her husband and son were having so many difficulties communicating they couldn't plan crop rotations or work schedules without an intermediary. She often felt caught between the two. Likewise Dayle revealed, "I try to keep good harmony in the house and keep relations running smoothly between my husband and son". Dotty confided:

> I was the peacemaker. My husband and his father always fought. Now he's doing the same thing. My husband, he blames all the problems on our son. It's always our son's fault. I tell him, 'you're doing the same thing your father did to you'. When my husband and son started working together it was worse, now they're talking more.

Phoebe is in the awkward position of needing to resolve conflicts between her husband and her father. She and her husband share equipment and resources with her father so the economic pressures of farming are spread across two families rather than one. In terms of family conflict, Phoebe confessed:

> I find sometimes I'm pulled, caught in the middle. I try to look at it from both sides. My dad can be hard to talk to at times. I try to stand back and see the whole picture, in order to smooth things over.

Her father is just about to retire and one of her brothers is going to take over their father's share of the farm. She worries about the transition since it will now be her brother and her husband working together. Her husband will now be working with his brother-in-law when most intragenerational farms have brothers working together. Phoebe expressed concerns this arrangement might not work; and if conflicts do arise she will be in the awkward position of negotiating between her husband and her brother:

> With my brother taking my father's place, I think things are going to be harder and more stressful. I don't really know what my brother's vision for the farm is, so who knows what will take place? So many factors will come into play.

More difficult perhaps is Debra's situation. She is a widow working with her parents-in-law. When her husband died unexpectedly, he was still working as a salaried employee as his parents continued to own the farm. Debra and her husband had already been living in the farm house with their children for five years; and her in-laws lived in town as they were preparing for retirement. However, succession had not yet occurred. Her husband and his mother did the book-keeping. Since her husband's death, she has had no access to the farm's financial records and she is not taking a salary from the farm. Instead she is using her husband's life insurance to finance the family household. Anxieties and pressures are obviously high as the family tries to cope with this unforeseen loss. During the interview, Debra admitted:

> My son is having a hard time dealing with things [He is eighteen and had to forfeit going to community college as planned to work on the farm]. It's not all his cup of tea. But I am trying to run things smoothly and keep everyone as happy as can be.

Not long afterwards, her mother-in-law burst into the kitchen where we were talking. She and her grandson had just had a fight. He had raced off in his car. She had raced from the barn to the house to confront Debra, who was immediately forced to undertake damage control. Debra excused herself from the interview in order to accompany her mother-in-law back to the barn; while I couldn't hear what was being said, it was clear Debra was tolerating a great deal of verbal abuse from her mother-in-law. When she returned, she told me "when something goes wrong, you're responsible".

Peggy conceded she and her family had endured a great deal of verbal abuse, especially from her sister-in-law, over the years. Peggy's husband and his brother farm together; and "things worked fine with the boys as long as they didn't get married". According to Peggy, there has been resentment and jealousy from her sister-in-law from the beginning. Even though Peggy has worked for ten years off the farm and her husband does some consulting work, her sister-in-law doesn't believe Peggy and her husband should be any better off financially than she and her husband. Consequently, Peggy's brother-in-law takes a salary all year while Peggy's husband only gets paid for part of the year though her husband "works just as hard as the brother-in-law" in farm production. In fact her in-laws control the farm accounts and finances, leaving Peggy to describe the farm finances as a 'grey' area which may one

day cause even greater conflicts between the cousins than currently exists between the brothers. As Peggy explains:

> We've never met together as two couples to socialise, even though the two brothers are farming together. There's always the fear of getting into it. The whole thing could go sky high if we confronted each other. It's gone on for too long this way to really clear the air — or for any good to come of it. It's like a volcano sitting there, ready to erupt. When it does it causes damage. You have to live with it. You hold your breath and wait a couple of weeks.

Debbie has also seen similar tensions between her family and her two brother-in-laws' families:

> There is conflict. They don't always agree but they get quiet rather than having heated arguments. They go about business and it gets forgotten. The wives agitate a bit more. I'm very vocal and I express my opinion whether it is wanted or not. A few years ago there were a lot more conflicts. Tensions have abated some now — salary increases have helped.

However, conflicts are sometimes not diverted or reconciled enough for extended family members to continue working together. Four of the farm wives in my study disclosed their farms had ceased to work as intragenerational farms because the brothers had incompatible visions of farming. Danielle and Donna are two sister-in-laws whose husbands — who are brothers — used to farm together with their father. These two brothers clearly had different visions of farming, evidenced by their very different farms. Danielle's farm has expanded rapidly and relies on two full-time herdsmen to milk the cows. Her husband does fieldwork but not barn work. Donna's farm is smaller, less reliant on waged labour and expanding at a slower rate. Donna hints more at the conflict which existed between the brothers than Danielle, though neither one will elaborate on the falling out. Donna simply states that as soon as enough capital could be secured for her husband to set up his own dairy farm they did so.

Pearl divulged her husband, brother-in-law and father-in-law had each had a one-third share of their 'family' farm. However, conflicts began to emerge between the brothers over how the farm should be run. These conflicts and her sister-in-law's disinterest in farming led her brother-in-law to leave after four years. Now she and her husband are in the process of paying her brother-in-law for his share of the farm, as well as buying out her father-in-law so he can retire. She confessed:

> It hasn't been an easy road. There was lots of conflict between us and my brother-in-law. Splitting the farm was stressful. I didn't want people to feel I was trying to push them out.

Penny and her husband also farmed with her husband's brother; and he left when the brothers couldn't agree on how the farm should be run. I should also point out while Pearl and Penny no longer have to deal with extended family conflicts, they are both now responsible for farm bookkeeping, jobs they did not have when their farms were 'extended' family operations. Farm relations can break down when families need to bridge family and work relations on a continual basis. Ghorayshi (1989: 573) contends:

> Conflict over production becomes an emotional conflict, which limits the possibility of negotiation. A conflict between employer and employee is not the same as a conflict between husband and wife, or father and son.

I would add conflict between brothers is also not the same as a conflict between employer and employee. As we have seen, their business partnership is complicated by family dynamics — or even old sibling rivalries as Peggy noted. Among my respondents, women on extended family farms revealed more instances of conflict and tension than those on nuclear family farms. Nevertheless, it would be an error to presuppose nuclear farm families are stress free.

Reducing family stress falls on farm wives in another way. They are routinely called upon to be "'good listeners' and 'sounding boards' for their husbands" (Tremayne, 1984: 126). Or as Delphy and Leonard (1994: 163) say, they need to have a good 'listening ear'. Perdita, for example, revealed:

> The farm is constant. It's all he thinks about, seven days a week. He's very dedicated to the farm. So I hear whatever he feels about it. It emerges over lunch and at our evening meal.

The majority of farm wives indicated listening to and supporting their husbands was part of their routine activities. Debra went so far as to claim, "you must be positive, support your husband and stand by him".

Working together as a couple can, however, provide another cause of stress. Diane elaborated on the stresses of working with your spouse:

> When things go wrong it can be horrendous working with your husband twenty-four hours a day. You start blaming each other for things; and you wonder, 'whose fault is it?'

Phoebe added:

> At times we are so tired, we don't have time for each other though we are working and living in the same place. When you're working separately you're more able to communicate, you don't lose touch with the world around you.

Priscilla recalled:

> I was out working with him as soon as we got married. There was lots of stress. It certainly wasn't as rosy as what he tried to tell me it was going to be like.

Obviously working together as a husband and wife team can put pressure on farm wives. They are ultimately working to keep both the family and the farm working and operating together. As Stacey (1986) noted, as long as they have both they have a home and a job without one they may not have the other. We can conclude with some confidence, if they fail to keep both working, they are unlikely to be on a family farm which by definition engages the family in farming. The cases where conflicts could not be resolved in extended families saw somebody leave. At other times conflicts are suppressed to avoid the break up of the farm operation as in the case of Peggy and even Debra. In the end, all of the farm wives in my study have weathered the ups and downs and endured family conflicts, if not between extended families then within their nuclear families. They continue to farm despite the many tensions, stresses and anxieties they have encountered.

C. Concerns for the family's health and safety on the farm

The constant stresses associated with farming are but one factor affecting the family's health and safety. Farms are dangerous places to live and work. Farm accidents are frequent occurrences. Powered machinery and vehicles which can easily overturn are only the most obvious hazards to life and limb. Sometimes people lose fingers or hands operating farm machinery, and deaths are not uncommon. These dangers are shared by all the family to the extent to which they share proximity to these occupational hazards. In fact:

> According to insurance actuarial tables, farming is a more hazardous profession than race-car driving or professional boxing. The machinery, the farm chemicals, the business stresses create a scenario ripe for trouble (Horowitz, 1996: 38).

This leads one person in Horowitz's article to say, "rural means risking your life".

To ensure high yields potato farmers have been encouraged by the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture to use herbicides, pesticides and insecticides to 'protect' their potatoes from insects, viruses and disease. *Potato Crop: Variety, Weed and Pest Control Recommendations* are published each year by the Atlantic Provinces Agriculture Services Co-ordinating Committee. This booklet recommends the use of particular herbicides and insecticides based on the weeds and insects they will control. The increase in herbicide and pesticide use has led to increased health and safety issues in the farm community. As the Committee itself says:

> Many of the insecticides used on potatoes are highly poisonous to man, animals, fish and beneficial insects. Poisoning of the applicator can occur by swallowing, inhaling or by skin contact (Advisory Committee on Potatoes, 1990: 5).

They end their recommendation booklet with a list of poison control and information centres.

In order to spray field crops in New Brunswick, applicators must have a farm licence to spray. To obtain such a licence one must complete a farm safety course on proper safety gear and spraying techniques. The course also outlines the proper weather conditions for spraying field crops. Despite taking the course, not everyone follows the recommended procedures, as Priscilla informed me:

> My husband does all the spraying. He's the one who's going to get it because he won't wear a mask.

Even Diane who has taken the course herself admitted:

> I don't wear the safety equipment when I am spraying. I'm just careful about when and where I spray.

On the other hand, Paige revealed:

> I am not allowed to do the spraying, my husband figures it is going to kill us. He wears his protective gear but he doesn't think the chemicals are safe.

The amount of chemicals sprayed on the potato crop has led Peggy's family to never eat potato skins. When baking a potato, Peggy thoroughly scrubs the potatoes, she parboils them and then bakes them. The skins are still discarded as 'unsafe for human consumption'. Pamela peels away half the potato, as do many other households I have visited in the 'potato belt', even though they themselves may not be growing potatoes.

From these accounts, the biocides in use on the farm are in danger of polluting the groundwater farm families drink and contaminating the soil family members come into daily contact with which means the whole family shares in the health risks created by the chemicals used in the production processes of agriculture. Jensen (1982: 12) warns:

> The usual image of farm life is incomplete and unrealistic. The pastoral poetry does not mention that farms have become hazardous places to live....Rural water supplies do not come from the babbling brook, as depicted by some television shows, but from wells that are endangered by seepage, changes in water table, drilling for oil and gas, and by seismographic testing.

Kelly informed me the Upper St. John River Valley — the potato belt — has the highest incidence of spina bifida in Canada. Dotty reflected:

> This area has very high instances of cancer. You look up and down the road and there's hardly a house where you don't know people who've died of cancer.

It was through cancer Posy and her husband lost their son and working partner. Their son's death, with no other successor, prompted them to retire from farming. The risks from chemical exposure are perhaps the indiscernible hazards lurking within the work site and environment on 'family' farms. Yet it is a risk which can come to impinge on the family household and the well-being of its members.

A more visible hazard is the farm machinery itself. Large pieces of farm equipment represent potential farm accidents. A point Jensen (1982: 12) makes:

> ...big machinery has produced an accidental death rate on Canadian farms which is 20% higher than the national average.

Donna explained her stress and anxiety with neighbourhood children who believed they were entering the 'amusement park' when they visited their farm. Diane commented:

> A farm is a dangerous place for kids to play. It's not a playground. Yet neighbourhood children will come here and start climbing up the side of the silo or doing other dangerous things. We don't like having extra kids around. They try to do things your kids wouldn't dream of doing because they know it's dangerous.

A recurring theme within my interviews was the daily problems of dealing with child care in an unsafe work environment. Pearl acknowledged:

> It's not safe for children to be around the harvester. My main focus has always been to keep the children safe.

Daisy elaborated:

> I always used to take the oldest to the barn with me but with two it got to be too much, so my mom would baby-sit. Now that they're a bit older the children usually tag along with me; but they'll go in and out of the barn. My daughter will at least come and tell me when her younger brother is on the tractor. I must always be keeping an eye on the them.

When children are young, women cope with child care by bringing their children to the barn in strollers or they keep them in playpens. Donna argued:

> I take the children with me to the barn. When they were young they were in their stroller. I have them with me. They learn to be responsible and deal with animals.

According to Diane:

> From the time they were born, the children lived in the barn. I always took them with me in their infant seats.

A story worth repeating from my previous research is how one farm wife dealt with the difficulties of child care in the era before playpens, infant seats and strollers by hanging her three oldest children in burlap feed bags on the barn wall while she was milking the cows (Machum, 1992). Danielle also indicated she would hang her children up high on the barn wall in their strollers so they could see her and she could see them. However, this wasn't necessarily an ideal solution since Danielle confided, "it's hard to work with a baby screaming in the background".

The stress created as a consequence of trying to care for children and do farm work is very evident in my interviews. Smith (1987: 166) also noted this phenomena in her research:

> Women have reported that one of the greatest personal stresses they face is the degree to which farm work distracts them from attending to their children's needs: whether or not there are children, the farm work must be done at certain times of the day, and during certain seasons.

This point was best made in my interviews by Pearl who told me:

> When I worked in the fields, I would pack a lunch and blankets and move the children from field to field. When you had to go, you had to go whether there was somebody to look after the children or not.

On most potato farms, farm wives did make alternative child care arrangements for their children during the busy seasons. They would either take their children to a sitter or have a sitter, mother or mother-in-law take over child care during the two peak farm work periods. Paige described how she coped when her children were young:

> In the early years we had a sitter. Then for a few years, my mom would come and stay in the spring, but not in the fall, we'd have a sitter again.

While Priscilla depicted her strategy to child care as follows:

> In the spring I would cart my children back and forth to the baby-sitter every day. In the fall I would just leave them there during the three to six weeks of harvest. Then when they got to be school age, I would take them with me in the truck.

Paige also revealed:

> We would take the children to the fields if we had to, we did a few of those unsafe things.

Debra, on the other hand, felt:

> I made it safe for the children to be with me when I did farm work. They learnt to be careful of the farm equipment and animals, they learned to appreciate the farm and the work we do.

Nevertheless farm accidents can and do happen. Three women in my study have broken limbs while participating in farm work. Dotty's father-in-law died in a farm accident. And Danielle recounted how on one cold winter morning she decided to leave her children in the house while she went to the barn to feed the calves. She was just gone for a few minutes, but when she returned the kitchen was on fire. "The children had decided they would help mummy by cooking breakfast" — a job they were ill equipped to do. Danielle insisted it just wasn't worth putting her children at risk to do farm work. Her solution was to reduce her involvement in farm work since that unforeseen incident could have turned into a much bigger tragedy if she hadn't returned to the farm house quickly. Romantic visions of farming are not echoed by the farm wives in my study who repeatedly point out farms are very dangerous places to live and work — it is an additional peril of combining home and family life with the work site.

IV. Distinguishing between Family and Farm

Most researchers, myself included, have repeatedly emphasised how the family and farm are interconnected. Family farms are reliant on family labour. The backyard and the farmyard often blend together. The work site spills over into the family home. Farm offices are located in the family farm house. Those without distinct office space can find themselves working at the dining room table. Farm meetings and consultations are routinely conducted in the large farm kitchen. Farm business calls come in on the family's phone line. Farm wives are often working in the barns and fields with children in tow. The boundaries between home and farm are for the most part blurred and porous.

My own attempts to get farm wives to evaluate how their time and energy was divided across spatial work locations — on farm, off farm, household and community — was often met by a blank stare. They found it very difficult to assess what proportion of their time was spent in each of these spheres. First of all, the ratio of work in each sphere varies from day to day, and season to season. Secondly, separating the family and farm was much more difficult than distinguishing between paid employment and community work. These latter categories when they occur away from the family farm have definite starting and ending points. However, many women were involved in cash generating activities which were farm related, like Betty's egg operation, or occurred within the family household — making it difficult to discern

when one began and the other ended. This is especially true when women are doing more than one thing at the same time.

Pamela Smith (1987) reports of one survey on farm women's work whose findings were discounted because there wasn't enough hours in the day to reflect the amount of time women reported doing particular activities. By understanding time as a limited and contained variable, we fail to appreciate how women achieve multiple outputs within the same time span. For example, women did needlework, cooked supper, kneaded bread and shelled peas for home freezing during my interviews[17]. My interview with Daisy was completed in the barn because milking time arrived before the interview was finished. Eleven of the women watched and tended to children as they answered my questions. Two of these women, Phyllis and Dotty, were grandmothers caring for their grandchildren while their sons worked on the farm and their daughter-in-laws worked in paid employment. Over half the interviews were interrupted by telephone calls or knocks at the door[18]. Sometimes women had to stop the interview two or three times to attend to the current 'crisis' — whether it be a mother-in-law stopping for baking for the community yard sale, children crying, husband's wanting to know when their wife would be available to go into town or sales people selling their wares. Within the span of two to three hours, these farm wives answered my interview questions, dealt with family and farm concerns and frequently produced a tangible product.

The narrow window of time spent discussing their work effectively illustrated how farm wives are engaged in tasks which span the spatial categories of work we have come to associate with them. It highlighted the difficulties women face in calculating the time they spend on specific tasks; as well as the inadequacy of trying to slot their work into exclusive analytic categories. To do so is to decontextualise the multifariousness of their work. Since most of the interviews were conducted in the farm kitchen, women were physically located within the family household yet their activities pertained not only to the family but to the farm enterprise, community events as well as my academic scholarship.

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[17] Sachs (1996: 130-131) also notes this phenomena. During her interviews women were "folding clothes, cooking lunch, changing diapers, washing dishes, watching children, weeding or sorting vegetables for farmers' markets".

[18] Whatmore (1991b: 90) also witnessed such interruptions: "...during the course of the research, a series of interruptions from the telephone, callers, and a husband or children requiring attention is recorded on every tape".

Farm wives must deal with both family and farm concerns. However, the overwhelming scholarly tendency has been to associate farm wives with family issues and to associate their farmer husbands with farm issues. As Nettie Wiebe (1995) argues this flies in the face of the 'working reality' of farm women. It can not provide the basis for understanding their lived realities. Farm wives do find themselves responsible for child care and domestic labour; but they are also involved in farm work and influenced by the circumstances created by their particular farm enterprise. We must as Wiebe (1995) argues concern ourselves with 'farm issues' — commodity production, marketing and the rhythms of work — as much as 'family issues' in our analysis and discussion of farm wives' work. 'Family' farming engages the family in farm production. Consequently, 'family' farming is organised around farming as well as family. As we will see in the next chapter, the farm and its commodity production is just as important a feature as family for understanding the work wives do.

V. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have looked at how features of family affect farm wives' work. Women become involved in 'family' farming through their marriage to male farmers. Some wives have farm backgrounds. Some wives marry established farmers. Other wives jointly decide with their husbands to take on farming as a family occupation. Regardless of their entry into farming, all farm wives end up participating in their husbands' careers. Farm wives end up taking part in their farmer husbands' work through peripheral activities, by providing back-up services and by being additional workers on the family farm. 'Family' farming can often mean dealing with extended family relations as well as nuclear family relations. Keeping the family in farming calls on farm wives to sustain family relationships, act as mediators and to manage stress among family members who are also farm workers. The farm environment spills over into the family domain causing farm wives to feel stress and anxiety as they try to ensure their families' health and safety. Being a farm wife requires women to juggle family and farm in their everyday work lives. Here we have focused on family and the consequences of organising farming around family labour. In the next chapter, we examine how farming is organised and the situations dairy and potato farming create for farm wives and their work.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE IMPACT OF A FARM'S 'COMMODITY' ON FARM WIVES' WORK

Farming is a topic most of us profess to know something about. We all eat, some of us are avid gardeners, others dedicated farmer's market consumers and some of us are neither physically nor generationally far removed from the farm — these experiences give us a common sense knowledge about agriculture and food production. For example, we may or may not recognise different crops growing in the field but we can all differentiate between field crops and animal husbandry. We know vegetables are vegetables; grains are grains; and that meat, eggs and milk are derived from animals. Most of us realise cows are milked on a daily basis whereas field crops are planted and harvested during specific times and seasons. We know farms are basically set up to produce specific foodstuffs. In fact, we frequently classify farms according to the product they produce: a dairy farm produces milk; a potato farm produces potatoes; a mixed vegetable farm grows various vegetables; a grain farm grows grains and so on. This distinction is also made by the agri-food sector, government departments and global markets in so far as they have organised their affairs around particular commodity sectors. Yet this most basic feature of farming has received very little attention from researchers attempting to explain the diverse range of activities and patterns to be found in farm wives' work.

Differences arising between one farm and another as a result of producing different products has been largely ignored because few social scientists are actually studying farming. And those studies of farm wives' work which have included farming in their analysis have tended to treat it as an homogeneous activity. Viewing farming as a uniform set of tasks often restricts discussion to the differences in the means and relations of production. Understanding farming as a set of tasks established by what the farm produces would lead to more discussion of the variations between farms created as a consequence of what the farm has set out to produce. Taking this latter approach, Ireland (1983), Smith (1987), Friedland (1991) and Padavic (1993) point out individual commodity sectors manifest distinct labour processes, marketing arrangements, income stability, capital requirements, and seasonal and daily work

rhythms. This is certainly true of dairy and potato farming in New Brunswick, Canada where farmers milking cows and farmers growing potatoes do not have the same political, economic and social conditions attached to their work. Dairy farmers are neither engaged in the same activities nor are they dealing with the same issues as potato farmers. This chapter investigates how the farmer's job — the kind of farming he does, in this case milking cows or growing potatoes — affects his wife's life and work.

The first section of the chapter considers what dealing with 'farming' means for farm wives. The second section examines how the two commodity sectors — dairy and potato farming — structure farm wives' work differently. Specifically the section considers how variations in the marketing and pricing arrangements, and seasonal and daily work rhythms characteristic of dairy and potato farming in New Brunswick, Canada impact on farm wives' work activities and schedules. The third section details how farm wives contribute to their husbands' farm work by looking at the specific production processes utilised on the family farms in my study.

I. Dealing with Farming

Few would disagree that family farming is a household based economic activity which socially and geographically combines the family with the economic enterprise of farming. This close proximity of work and home often means farm wives are dealing with farming at one and the same time as they are dealing with the family. A point Ghorayshi made when she argued:

> [On the family farm], one does not leave the family to go to work. When one is at work, one is at the same time, in the family (Ghorayshi 1989: 573).

The boundaries between where one begins and the other ends is not entirely clear. As we saw in Chapter Four, it is this interweaving of the family household and the farm enterprise which effectively draws farm wives into their husbands' farming job. In fact, 'working at home' is among the five features Janet Finch concluded were especially important for eliciting a wife's contribution to her husband's work. She contended:

> There seem to be five features of the way in which work can be organised which have especial importance both for structuring a wife's life and for eliciting her contributions. These are: flexibility of working hours; the possibility of work being done at home; living in institutional settings; work which is socially contaminating; and any kind of self-employment (Finch, 1983: 131).

Family farming extracts extensive contributions from farm wives because to a certain extent it embodies all of these five qualities. Specifically, family labour must be

flexible to deal with the weather and seasonality of farming; financial accounting, planning and management work is usually done 'at home'; the family lives on the farm; growing food is a vocation which provides a necessary service to society; and farmers are self employed. Because of the way farming is organised as an occupation, a woman who marries a farmer will inevitably find herself contributing to and dealing with her husband's *farming* job.

Even so, 'family' issues like those highlighted in the last chapter have received more attention in the literature on farm women's work than 'farm' issues (Wiebe, 1995; Friedland, 1991). Discussions of family labour, family relations and the gender inequities to be found within family households are far more prevalent than discussions of commodity production, marketing arrangements, and the seasonal and daily work rhythms of farming. This is undoubtedly a consequence of associating farm wives with the family household and their farm husbands with farm production. Starting from the premise 'the barn is his, the house is hers' invariably leads researchers to study how a farm wife contributes to her farmer husband's job rather than how her farmer husband's job contributes to her work.

This second question also tends to be neglected because farming as an occupation is not well understood. Researchers studying farm wives' work discuss farming as though all farmers have a generic 'farming' job. With the assumption all farmers have

Figure 2: Differentiating between 'Family' Farms

	FARMS PRODUCING THE SAME COMMODITY VARY ACCORDING TO:
DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF 'FAMILY' FARMS:	– Size of operation – Levels of mechanisation/ Technology employed – Family or hired labour to get the job done – Stage of the family life cycle/ farm business cycle – Etc.

the same job, researchers proceed to look for distinguishing features of 'family' farms to account for differences in farm wives' work. Comparing one 'family' farm to another in turn prompts researchers to focus on variations in attributes shared by all farms irrespective of variations in time and place or in what they are producing. Figure 2 argues the features used to distinguish between one family farm and another — such as size of operation, levels of mechanisation and social relations of production — are

also the same features used to distinguish between family farms producing the same commodity. True, not all farms producing the 'same' commodity are the same. Some are large, others are small. Some use state of the art technology to get the job done, others do not. Some rely on hired help to get the job done, others depend on family labour. However, distinguishing between big and small farms, high and low levels of mechanisation, avant-garde or archaic technologies, the use of family or hired labour and so on to explicate differences in farm wives' work neglects the equally important differences for their work created by the farm's commodity production. Figure 3 shows this oversight is a consequence of focusing on the multitude of ways farmers go about doing their job instead of appreciating they are engaged in substantially different jobs.

Figure 3: Distinguishing between 'How the Job Gets Done' and 'The to be Job Done'

HOW THE JOB GETS DONE	THE JOB TO BE DONE
Big or small operation? Labour or capital intensive? Hired Help or Family labour? etc.	Dairy farming or Potato farming? Milking cows twice daily or planting and harvesting potatoes in the spring and fall?

Ironically, no member of a farm community would fail to recognise farmers are engaged in different jobs. In fact, one of the very first things farmers do upon meeting is identify and distinguish themselves according to what they produce[1]: they are potato farmers, cattle ranchers, grain producers, dairy farmers, market gardeners and so on. Even though all 'farmers' tend to regard themselves as being engaged in the common endeavour of food production, those producing the same commodity have even stronger ties as they band together in commodity specific industry groups. In other words, 'farmers' may all work under the umbrella of 'farming' but they recognise themselves as having different jobs which are delineated by the different foodstuffs they produce. They are not the only ones to make such distinctions.

As we saw in Chapter Two, besides studying broader phenomena, Statistics Canada regularly produces agricultural statistics pertaining to particular farm

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[1] I saw this first hand at the National Farmers Union conference I attended in October 1995; and also during my attendance at various New Brunswick Farm Women's Network events where women frequently identified themselves according to their farm's commodity production.

commodity sectors.[2] The federal and provincial ministries of agriculture also divide farmers according to the commodities they produce. In New Brunswick the agricultural ministries have created whole departments and research stations devoted to particular commodity concerns. Likewise, the National Farmers Union and the Federation of Agriculture routinely sub-divide into commodity groups in order to deal with the issues and concerns relevant to individual commodities. Differences in scales of production, levels of mechanisation and social relations of production within a commodity sector are seemingly transcended when commodity groups meet to deal with the farm issues pertinent to their product sectors.

In short, farmers producing the same commodity view themselves as having common concerns which set them apart from farmers producing other commodities. While some commodities may share certain attributes, each commodity sector tends to retain its own distinct blend of properties in a given time and place. Farmers, industry groups and governments recognise different commodity sectors represent substantially different 'farming' jobs. A point which seems to have been lost in the research on farm wives' work since 'how the job gets done' has taken precedence over 'the job to be done' (see Figure 3) and the particular economic, political and social conditions pertaining to 'the job to be done'.

In all probability, researchers studying farm wives' work do not realise they have overlooked differences in 'the job to be done' in favour of different ways for 'getting the job done'. Since talking about what the farm produces easily draws one into the details of a farm's commodity production process it is easy enough to understand how 'the job to be done' gets passed over. Focusing on variations in the 'production process' leads researchers to study the contrasting ways for 'getting the job done' instead of studying the different 'jobs to be done'. Studying how the job gets done in turn paves the way for researchers to document farm wives' contributions to farming. Such a research agenda led Gasson and Errington (1993: 167) to conclude farm wives

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[2] Unfortunately Statistics Canada does not develop the same data for each commodity sector which makes it difficult to compare commodities they don't treat in the same way. This is true of dairy and potato farming where dairy farming is distinguished in some data tables in which potato farming is not and vice versa. Dairy farming, for instance, is sometimes collapsed with cattle farming; potato farming with other field crops. Estimated costs for special runs to extract the data pertinent to each commodity sector from existing published data are very prohibitive. While not having certain figures for both commodity sectors did not detract from this case study, it may make it impossible to rely on national data when undertaking other comparative research. It may also suggest another reason why commodity has tended to be neglected by researchers.

contributed more to farming than their farmer husbands contributed to the family household:

> While farm wives may receive less help from their husbands in the home, they are more involved in their husband's work than the average wife. Coping with competing demands is part of the [farm] wife's lot.

Nevertheless, in the process of recognising and making visible farm wives' multifarious contributions to 'family' farming, most researchers have failed to consider the obverse question: how does farming contribute to farm wives' work?[3]

According to Wiebe (1995: 159) dealing with farming would mean studying the effects of product marketing, commodity production and pricing on farm wives' work. However, few researchers have identified these features of farming as important structural dimensions which create situations to which farm wives and their families must then respond. But when they are dealing with farming, farm wives are dealing with the specific conditions created by the farm's commodity production, i.e. their husbands' job. Since farm wives are dealing with the particulars of their husbands' 'farming' job, the differentiation commodity creates between one farm enterprise and another, between one farmer's work and another, between one farm wife's work and another should not be ignored.

Beginning with the premise farmers producing milk are engaged in a different job than farmers growing potatoes leads one to ask: What kind of job are women marrying into when they marry dairy farmers or potato farmers? How does the job of milking cows differ from the job of growing potatoes? What situations does the production of one commodity rather than another create for farm wives and their work? Can differences in farm wives' living standards, work activities, patterns and rhythms of work be traced to differences in their husbands' jobs as farmers? To answer these questions requires a comparative study of dairy and potato farming rather than the more common practice of comparing one 'family' farm to another.

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[3] But how her husband's job and the 'family' farm contribute to a farm wife's work is not a straightforward matter since neither families nor farms are uniform. Both families and farms are themselves changing over time which confounds the problem of trying to sort out the diverse range of families and farms engaged in family farming. Many have attempted to deal with the changes within family farms over time by examining farm business cycles and family life cycles. However, such an approach assumes there is a linear, progressive 'model of development' for both families and farms. It fails to appreciate the diversity in family composition and farm activities present on family owned and operated commercial farm enterprises.

What is more, a comparison of commodity sectors calls for one to reverse the more intuitive order of study: from production, rhythms of farming and marketing to marketing, rhythms of farming and production. Reversing the order enables us to first consider, *how a husband's work — in this instance the job of milking cows or growing potatoes — structures his wife's life;* and then secondly to address, *how farm wives contribute to their husbands' farm work.* These are the questions taken up in the following chapter sections. The next section considers how the marketing and work rhythms associated with dairy and potato farming affect farm wives' work patterns and activities. The final section examines wives' varying contributions to dairy and potato farming by documenting the differences which emerged in my interviews between farm wives' work within each commodity sector.

II. Milking Cows or Growing Potatoes?: How Farming Structures Farm Wives' Work

The 'job' the farmer and his family have undertaken to do on a 'family' farm is established by the farm's commodity. What a farm produces sets out the kind of work that needs to be done, when the work needs to be done, and under what conditions the product will be marketed and the 'farmer' paid for his work. As noted in Chapter Four, Finch (1983) and Delphy and Leonard (1992) argue the work which wives are required to do is often determined by their husbands' occupation. A husband's job, in this case the job of farming, they argue, "...not only influences the actual tasks [his wife] performs, but also her rhythm, patterns and place of living, how hard she has to work, and her standard of living" (Delphy and Leonard, 1992: 241). Since a farm's commodity establishes the job the farmer and his family have undertaken to do, what does the 'job' of dairy farming or potato farming entail? What are they producing? How are they paid for their product, i.e. their work? What hours will they need to work to produce and market their product? How will their work be organised and structured by what they are producing? How will the features of a particular commodity sector affect the day to day and overall operations of the family farm and farm wives' work?

Farmers milking cows are not engaged in the same activities as farmers growing potatoes. For starters raising and milking cows involves a different set of work rhythms and labour processes than growing potatoes. After all, raising and milking cows will not produce potatoes and the work processes required to grow potatoes will not generate cows and milk. Obviously, dairy farmers are milking cows and potato farmers are growing potatoes. Less obvious is the product differentiation within a commodity sector.

As consumers, we know milk and potatoes are transformed into other products. Our supermarket shelves are filled with different dairy and potato products. We distinguish between cream, cheese, butter and milk. We buy different varieties of potatoes to boil or bake. We buy 'chips' and 'crisps'[4]. What we may not realise is that these products are sometimes created from different farm products. Even the rural sociology literature and the literature on farm women's work, in as much as they consider commodity at all, assume milk is milk and a potato is a potato. All farms producing milk and all farms producing potatoes are discussed as though they are engaged in the same activity. But potato farmers can be growing seed, table or processing potatoes; dairy farmers can be selling fluid milk or cream. Seed potatoes are not, in fact, the same product as processing potatoes or table stock potatoes; fluid milk is not the same product as cream. In New Brunswick, the majority of the province's dairy farms are producing fluid milk like Barbara but a few are still separating milk and selling cream like Betty. Potato farms may be growing for one select market or they may be hedging their bets and growing for two or more markets. Betty's farm, for instance, is selling only seed potatoes while Barbara's farm is selling processing and seed potatoes. A potato farm must decide 'the mix' of the potato crop before planting since each potato market utilises different varieties and is governed by different regulations.

In the case of milk production, fluid milk and cream are sold through the provincial Milk Marketing Board and distributed by the Milk Marketing Board to processors. Dairy farms in New Brunswick must purchase 'quota' from the Milk Marketing Board in order to legally sell their product. The purpose of the Milk Marketing Board is to ensure a steady supply of milk to the public and to dairy product manufacturers. Dairy farms are, therefore, limited to producing and selling the amount stipulated in their quota agreement. Overproduction or underproduction will result in heavy fines for the farm. However, dairy farms are always ensured of a buyer since the Milk Marketing Board constantly regulates the amount of milk being produced and consumed in the province. It can make quota available when production is lower than consumption or it can take quota away if consumption is lower than production. Unused quota is sold on 'the milk quota exchange' once a month, thereby enabling family farms to buy quota if they wish to expand production and to sell quota if they wish to contract or exit dairy farming. As Diane explained:

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[4] In Canada, 'crisps' are called potato chips and 'chips' are usually referred to as french fries or fries, though the dish 'fish and chips' means what it does in the UK.

> Each month there is a quota exchange and you put in your bid if you want to buy more quota. In order for there to be quota to buy, somebody needs to sell. Last month quota was being sold for about $11,500 [Cdn] per kilogram of butterfat. At the beginning of the summer Canada allotted New Brunswick extra quota [for industrial milk] and we were given an extra three per cent to produce. Then at the end of the summer we lost two per cent so we didn't gain very much overall.

On the other hand, potato farming in New Brunswick has no such marketing arrangement. Potato farms must speculate on how much to produce based on sales from previous years and market projections. At least in theory, they can expand or contract their production from year to year depending upon how they judge the market. But complications emerge because potato farms must decide before planting whether or not they will grow varieties appropriate for the seed, table or processing markets. Over the course of the year, potatoes are sold on the 'open' market and farmers seek to time their sales as best they can, given that potato prices vary over the course of the year. Seed potatoes are sold to brokers who usually export them and in the spring they can be sold directly to farmers. Growers for the table stock market must sell to brokers, direct to supermarket chains or through farmers' markets. Producers of processing potatoes sell their products to a small number of multinational manufacturers of chips and crisps. These farmers are usually dependent on the terms of 'pre-planting' contracts which allow the processor to choose the time of sale, the conditions of potato storage and the unilateral right to evaluate quality and suitability.

Milk and cream are collected from dairy farms every other day by one of the dairy's owned and operated milk trucks. In contrast, potato farms must store their perishable product, often for many months, before market opportunities are ripe or processors call for a shipment. Dairy farmers are paid bi-weekly by the Milk Marketing Board on the basis of their quota, while potato farmers only get paid when and if their potatoes are sold. The conditions under which a family farm produces and markets its product are, therefore, established by existing production and marketing arrangements. While the social, political and economic environment surrounding a particular commodity's production can and does change over time, in the short to medium term it is usually quite stable.

Figure 4 summarises the differences in how dairy and potato farming are presently organised in New Brunswick, Canada. First, there are speciality markets within the commodity sectors which creates product differentiation among family farms producing the 'same' commodity. Secondly, commodity sectors have vastly different marketing and pricing arrangements. Potatoes are sold in 'open', uncertain markets while milk is sold in a 'closed' market protected and regulated by the provincial Milk

Marketing Board. Thirdly, each commodity sector has different work rhythms which result in different labour requirements and work hours for production. It would stand

Figure 4: Dairy Farming versus Potato Farming in New Brunswick

DAIRY FARMING	POTATO FARMING
Milking Cows for Fluid and Industrial Milk Marketing Sectors	**Growing Potatoes** for Seed, Table, Processing (and cull) Markets
Daily work: Milking twice a day Seasonal hay/ silage/ grain crops	**Seasonal work:** Spring Planting, Summer maintenance, Fall Harvest, Winter Marketing
Closed Market: Regulated by the New Brunswick Milk Marketing Board	**Open Market**: International, USA and Canada
Paid on a Regular Basis because milk is collected every other day	**Paid on an Irregular Basis** since it depends on when potatoes are sold

to reason, therefore, the production of one commodity rather than another may make different demands on the farm family in terms of labour, time and resources. This section explores how two contrasting features of their husbands' farm job — marketing arrangements and work rhythms — effectively come to structure farm wives' lives and work.

A. Getting Paid for the Job: Commodity Markets and Pricing

Starting with how the 'family' farm gets paid for the product it produces would appear to be putting the cart before the horse since the farm commodity must be produced before it can be marketed and sold. However, a wife's standard of living and how hard she will have to work is influenced by the amount of money her husband makes (Smith, 1979; Luxton, 1981; Finch, 1983; Delphy and Leonard, 1985 and 1992). Indeed, as Finch has noted, the economic situation of wives is often directly determined by their husbands' jobs in terms of the method of payment, how well and how regularly they are remunerated:

> In addition to the absolute level of earnings, it is interesting to note that a wife's life is structured both by the *way* her husband is paid and by the *type* of remuneration he receives. .....the method of payment — weekly or monthly, cash or cheque, and so on — imposes a certain pattern upon the way wives can organise their own lives and especially their expenditure (Finch, 19843: 22).

In the case of farming, a husband's income and when he is paid is determined by the marketing and pricing arrangements attached to the sale of the farm's commodity. Therefore, it is completely logical to begin analysis of how farming structures farm wives' work with commodity marketing and pricing arrangements.

In New Brunswick, when and how dairy farms get paid differs from potato farms because of differences in the marketing arrangements of these two commodities. Milk is sold in a closed market; potatoes are sold on the open market. Dairy farmers must sell their fluid milk and cream to the Milk Marketing Board; potato farmers must decide whether or not they will sell directly to consumers and supermarkets, sell to brokers or processors. Dairy farmers are assured a regular income and economic security as long as they produce their stipulated quota; potato farmers have no such security unless they grow processing potatoes and contract their entire crop to the processors before planting. Seed and table stock growers face economic uncertainties since prices can fluctuate quite drastically over the course of the year. All potato growers deal with irregular payments since processors, brokers, supermarkets and to a certain extent even consumers at the 'farm gate' decide when the farmer's potatoes will be bought and delivered. These differences in marketing arrangements ultimately mean when, how and how much the 'farmer' will be paid for his work differs between commodity sectors which, as we will see in this section, produces differences in how farm wives' lives and work are structured.

In terms of dairy farms, since the early 1970s, they have been paid by the Milk Marketing Board on the 15th and the 30th day of each month. This means dairy farms can budget and plan their expenditures on a monthly basis. As Diane explained:

> We get paid in the middle of the month based on last month's earnings and then at the end of the month the Milk Marketing Board pays the balance based on how much we actually delivered during the month. We pay our workers and take a salary each week. We do run on an overdraft [because they have been expanding their operation] but we have a steady cash flow and there's always income coming in from the farm. Every year we budget and discuss our financial plans with the bank.

Delia also discussed how the farm's steady pay cheque enabled them to juggle expenditures and income:

> The farm account and our household account are one and the same. It's really a revolving system, it just goes and goes unless the bank calls and tells us we have to go in and straighten something out. Often we overspend and we have to play catch up but the bank knows another cheque will be arriving in two weeks.... We pay people when the milk cheque is deposited as we see fit, we're always working within a range.

Dixie, who is no longer farming, indicated they had many troubles paying their bills but the unfaltering regularity of the milk cheque made it possible to regularly submit partial payments:

> We were in debt and really couldn't afford to pay all our bills outright so every two weeks we would decide how to divide the milk cheque out. We just rigged payments so we could pay on each account each month.

The importance of a regular pay cheque for household budgeting was exemplified by Priscilla and Posy whose farms were once mixed operations producing both cream and potatoes. These two women relied on the 'cream' cheque to pay for household costs because income from the potato crop was incalculable in absolute terms and when it would arrive. Priscilla explained:

> When we milked cows, I ran the household on the cream cheque. It [the cheque] came every two weeks and I knew I'd have that money. I could count on it. But it takes all winter into May to sell the potato crop.... We haven't had a potato cheque for six months [this was in September], we're living off the bank loan so spending is on hold. In the winter, you know how you're going to fare this year. That's when you decide on things.

Likewise, Posy told me:

> The cream cheque would come every two weeks. The cream money was the only spending money we had. When the potato harvest was done, we would sit and watch the markets. We didn't know when we would sell the potato crop.

Also recall in Chapter One that Barbara said they keep the cows in order to help 'even out the cash flow' over the year.

Wives on dairy farms are thus able to organise the farm and household finances around the milk cheque in a way which wives on potato farms can not. For instance, it was not uncommon for wives on dairy farms to tell me, as Dayle did, "we pay ourselves when the milk cheque comes". Dorothy elaborated on this point :

> We draw cheques to run the household on the 15th and 30th of each month which also corresponds to when we get paid for the milk. We spend money on ourselves. We farm to live, we don't live to farm. And we live comfortably.

In total, six dairy farms — Dayle, Dorothy, Danielle, Deidre, Donna and Debra[5] — have an established salary or living allowance which is paid in accord with milk

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[5] Before his death, Debra's husband received a bi-weekly salary. She was not paid for her farm work and she continues to not be paid for farm work even though she is working more than full-time hours in farm production. Therefore, her family is no longer drawing a salary from the farm owned by her in-

payments. On the other hand, Debbie's husband receives a weekly salary. Similarly, Diane and Dolly take a weekly cash allowance for groceries, gas and the children's school and extracurricular expenses. In short, just over half the dairy farms in my study have well-established household monies. Those who do not still indicate the presence of a consistent income. For example, Daphne told me:

> We don't take a salary from the farm, we take as we go and we try to take things in stride and keep expenses running smoothly.

Moreover, receiving a regular and reliable payment for their farm product allows farm wives to organise their bill paying and grocery shopping around their husband's salary which is deducted from the milk cheque. Danielle explained:

> I do pay roll and the farm accounts the day the milk cheque is deposited. When I go [to the city] shopping also coincides with the milk payment.

On the other hand, as Priscilla said earlier 'spending is often on hold' for farm wives on potato farms. Given the irregularity of potato sales, farm wives on potato farms find it much more difficult to plan their household expenditures and spending. Phyllis made this point most bluntly:

> You can't budget with no fixed income. There is no fixed income here... so how can you budget?

Paige mentioned this as well:

> Income comes in one lump for us — at the end of June — because we sell our seed potatoes to local farmers in time for spring planting. It's really difficult to run a weekly budget with a yearly pay cheque. We have an operating loan. It runs like a line of credit. We pay if we use it. So the goal is to put off using it as long as we can. I keep the household expenses down because every dollar counts.

Also remember Penny's comments about income from potato farming:

> There's a lot of financial stress, cash flow problems. The bills are here but the money isn't coming in from the crop.

As we already discussed in Chapter Four, the uncertainty of not knowing when exactly or how much potato farms will be paid for their crop creates a lot of stress for wives on these farms. They repeatedly told me they 'shopped for bargains', they 'didn't believe in paying full price for things' and they would travel farther afield to purchase household and farm items if it meant financial savings. Bargain hunting is especially important for wives of potato farmers since even when potato farms deliver

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laws instead the family household is run from life insurance monies. But I include her here because this is how her husband was paid.

their potatoes to processors, brokers or supermarkets, they generally have to wait another thirty days before they are paid. This is even true for Paige's seed potato farm — and they are selling directly to other potato farmers — which is why she said their money arrives in one lump sum at the end of June. Moreover, when they are eventually paid, potato farms tend to be paid by cheque which often necessitates a trip to the bank for farm wives.

In contrast, dairy farms have the option of receiving a cheque for their milk payment or of having their payment directly deposited electronically into their farm account. In my sample, the majority of dairy farms have selected this 'direct deposit' option. As Debra explained:

> We used to get sent the milk cheque every two weeks and we would have to wait eight days before it arrived in the mail and was deposited in the bank. Now it is direct deposited. We get eight more days interest so it would be silly not to [have it direct deposited].

For Dolly, having the milk cheque direct deposited facilitates banking:

> We have all cheques — milk cheques, subsidy cheques, income tax cheques — everything, direct deposited. It means you don't have to take cheques to the bank anymore.

Dawn echoed this point:

> Everything is direct deposited now. It makes things much easier. You don't have to plan things around the bank's hours. We can just write cheques for payments and mail them.

Daisy, however, only has the milk cheque direct deposited which means cheques for their other commodity, turkeys, must be delivered to the bank:

> Our Milk Marketing Board cheque is being direct deposited but the cheques for the turkeys are not. So I need to go to the bank when they arrive. It would be easier if they were direct deposited too.

Delia elaborated on the convenience of direct deposits and pre-arranged automatic bill paying:

> Having the milk cheque direct deposited has certainly been a convenience for carrying things out; and we also make a lot of automatic payments. For example, the phone bill and electricity bill are automatically debited from the account. This has cut down on a lot of running around.

Daphne's husband, on the other hand, still continues to receive the milk cheque in the mail which makes household purchases, bill paying and banking more onerous for her:

> The milk cheque is mailed from the Milk Marketing Board so it takes us an extra week to get it and then I have to take it to the bank. It's his choice [her husband's], not mine to be paid this way. It would be much simpler for me if it was direct deposited. Bank cards have helped a lot.

Women on potato farms are in the same position as Daphne because they do not have the option of direct deposits. Since most of the farm wives in my study handle the farm and household accounts, these differences in the way their husbands are paid produce differences in the way their household purchases, bookkeeping, accounting and banking activities are structured and organised.

Since dairy farms know when and how much they will be paid they can plan financial expenditures whereas wives on potato farms often find themselves waiting to make purchases like Priscilla because they are not able to forecast when or how much money will be available for the household. Interestingly, potato farms growing processing potatoes are an exception because they have pre-planting contracts which indicate the amount they will make when they deliver that portion of their crop to the processor. While farms growing processing potatoes know what they'll be earning they do not know when they will deliver their product and ultimately be paid for it. Moreover, their returns have not been very high as Penny reported:

> Over 80 per cent of our crop was contracted to McCains so we knew more or less how much we would be making. But we haven't been making money with McCains, in fact we were losing money, so we've started growing seed potatoes.

Pamela also said:

> We contract some of our potatoes to McCains but it's not enough money. It's not enough of a return.

Patricia indicated the same situation:

> We were growing almost 90 per cent of our crop for McCains so we knew pretty well what we'd be getting. But we've cut back so that we're only growing about half our crop for them right now. It's a little bit of a protest because we haven't been getting good prices and our transportation costs are higher with them than with the Small Fry company.

Most potato farms prefer to grow potatoes for a number of markets in order to hedge their bets in terms of prices. However, this means they have far less certainty over 'how much' the crop will make. For example, Phoebe revealed:

> With our processing potatoes we have a guaranteed price but we don't know when exactly the crop will go or how much money we will make for our table potatoes, so the house usually gets left. I'm the lowest on the totem pole for buying things. It gets to you after a while.

Posy, who is now retired, put it this way:

> With the potato crop you never knew from one day to the next what you'd get. You had to stick to the [processor's] contract but with the rest of the crop you'd be looking for a good deal to sell. If we needed something we would get it. We wouldn't go without but we watched our spending. When you don't have it, you don't spend it.

Looking for 'a good deal' or having 'a good year' are phrases used quite regularly amongst potato farmers' wives and are best translated as a financially successful year. For instance, Pamela said:

> We contract some of our crop because then, at least, we know we'll have that much money. But we're not getting enough of a return. It's not enough money. We have a lot of grey hairs but not much money. We've only had two good years in the past ten.

Many wives on potato farms defer major household costs or renovations to when the farm has a 'good financial year'. According to Priscilla:

> Household improvements occurred over time as we could afford them. When we had a good year we would renovate a room or two in the house. The farm comes first so we would wait to fix the house.

Likewise Phyllis indicated:

> Sometimes you have to put things off. It just depends on the size of the project. The house and the farm are both working at the same time so you can't totally ignore one or the other. But in terms of improvements, the farm would take priority over the house.

Patricia revealed the same strategy:

> We would buy the materials to fix the house. I would shop around to see where I could get the best deal. We would wait until we could afford things. We never deprived the farm, we made household renovations when we had a good year.

As a consequence of not knowing how much the farm will make for the crop, farm wives on potato farms reported deferring spending and shopping 'for bargains' far more frequently than wives on dairy farms. This is not to say wives on dairy farms are not cautious with spending. For instance, Daphne confided: "We need to be thrifty. We watch what we buy." But in my study, the wives of dairy farmers were far more likely to talk about 'investments' and 'expansion' as the rationale for deferring household expenditures than wives of potato farmers. Donna explained:

> Basically our approach has been to invest what we do make back into the farm, for more efficient machinery, milking equipment and barn accessories, so my husband and I can run it on our own. I get paid $12,000 a year [from the farm] and that's what I use to run the household, but if I need more I can go to the farm account. We're all here working to the same end: the betterment of the business. The goal is to keep the business going, you need to watch expenses and be flexible. We've made do with a lot less money some years to get where we are today.

Debra indicated a similar position:

> When you need money you draw it out. But to make money you've got to roll it into the business, you can't use it for household expenses. I don't allow myself much for the household. Money isn't important. It's what you do with money that's important. We've built and expanded as money came along.

Also recall Danielle's comments in Chapter Four:

> This house is falling apart. But we've been expanding the farm. The last time we put money into expansion, I said, 'the next time it's my turn, the money should go towards the house'.

In other words, wives of dairy farmers like wives of potato farmers must sometimes wait to make household purchases. The difference is wives on dairy farms know they are putting off purchases in order to put earnings elsewhere while wives on potato farms are doing so because the earnings are simply not there. For example, Priscilla divulged:

> Some years the people working for us earn more than we do here. I take a salary from the farm and I've never felt guilty spending the money I earned. I bought things I wanted rather than household needs. But during hard times, I wouldn't be taking a salary then, it wouldn't be there to take.

Phyllis maintained:

> We need a better, more effective way to market our crops. What's worrying the most is the lack of a secure income — there's wives, houses and families to think about.

Her thoughts were shared by Pearl:

> I would like to have more financial security. It can be very worrying. Sometimes I feel like we're jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire. There are so many financial stresses and unknowns. You want to be on the ball and you hope you aren't overlooking things.

Penny echoed their thoughts:

> Financially I don't like the stress. I don't want the responsibility. I don't enjoy the book work or the responsibility of all these government forms. But there's nobody else to do it. It's what farm wives do. You just have to go one year at a time, there's so many unknowns.

In response to this economic uncertainty present on potato farms, I found wives married to potato farmers were more likely to be engaged in regular, permanent cash generating activities than wives married to dairy farmers. This is not to say wives on dairy farms are not engaged in such activities but my research suggests they work more sporadically and commit less time to waged employment and cash generating work than wives of potato farmers. This difference in the nature and amount of time

farm wives devote to cash generating activities would be lost if one simply counted the incidence of cash generating work. For example, Table 5.1 suggests there is little

Table 5.1: Cash Generating Activities of Respondents at time of Interview

Dairy	Potatoes	Total	
Currently Working for Cash	6	6	12
Worked for Cash in the Past	6	4	10
No $ generating activity	4	4	8
Total	16	14	30

difference in the number of farm wives engaged in cash generating activities from one commodity sector to the next. In fact, there appears to be a more or less even split between commodity sectors: six wives of dairy farmers in my study were working for cash and six wives of potato farmers were working for cash; six dairy farmers' wives had worked for cash at other points in time but weren't at the time of the interview whereas four potato farmers' wives were in that situation and four in each commodity sector had never been engaged in cash generating activities beyond the farm enterprise. Counting incidences of work is insufficient, however, since upon closer examination wives on potato farms work more hours and more regularly than wives on dairy farms; and what is more, they expressed contrasting motivations for working.

The six women currently working for cash on dairy farms work part-time: Daphne works two days a month doing secretarial work; Dayle works four to six days a month as a consultant; Deidre does a variety of activities from home; and on their intragenerational farm, Debbie works two weekends a month milking cows as a farm employee; Debra and Danielle work the least hours on an on-call and freelance basis. Daphne saw her income as inconsequential while Dayle reduced her salary from the farm according to the amount she earned from her consultation work and Deidre indicated: "I now do things I can do from home but it's not a major income". Debbie is paid twice a year when she submits her bill and she uses her money "to buy clothes and gifts". Debra and Danielle only worked 'off the farm' occasionally and they viewed their income as surplus or 'pin money'. Debra worked as a cashier during Christmas rush-hour shopping if it didn't "interfere with farm work"; and Danielle did freelance art work on the rare occasions such work became available. Neither one of these women could rely on such work opportunities as they occurred on a seasonal or sporadic basis.

Conversely, the six women on potato farms work each week on a regular basis and are very reliant on their earnings for running the family household. Peggy works three to four days a week as a secretary; Perdita works on-call as a casual cashier filling in two to three days a week; Penny gives piano lessons; Paige looks after children after school; Phyllis regularly works as a secretary; and Pamela has her own 'cattle' operation separate from the potato farm. They all indicated their cash generating work played an important role in family farm finances: it was either used to maintain and upkeep the family household, to finance children's school activities or it was ploughed back into the farm operation.

Sachs argues wives engaged in income-generating activities are able to subsidise farm operations "during periods of inadequate income and contribute to capital needs in the lag between planting, harvesting and marketing" (Sachs, 1996: 125). However my data suggests this is more true of wives on potato farms than wives on dairy farms. Of course, it is potato farms which experience a lag between planting, harvesting and marketing while dairy farms in New Brunswick do not. In other words, farms producing different commodities have different financial arrangements which ultimately affect farm wives involvement in cash generating activities — a point researchers have generally not considered when studying farm women and their 'off farm' work. In fact, wives on potato farms who were engaged in cash generating work made it clear their income went to maintain the family household and was a response to the instability in their husbands' farming incomes. For example, Peggy told me:

> I started working so I could have money to buy things I wanted. The farm isn't providing a living. It's just not doing what it's supposed to. The farm can never justify putting money into our house. We're marginal. We've received the same amount of money from the farm for the past ten years. I'm expected to use my money for household expenses. It allows the money being generated in the farm to get recycled back into the farm, to keep the farm going. In the past I used to be able to put money aside and buy extra things for the house, clothes for the kids; but now one hundred per cent of my earnings are being used to pay the [household] bills. I am working to pay the bills.

Perdita explained:

> I work part-time right now and my mother-in-law looks after the children. I worked full-time until my first child was born. Then I switched to part-time. I would like to work full-time but I can't find a sitter to work my hours.... I don't want to work any more hours than I have to, but my money goes into the household account. It's what I use to run the household.

Phoebe, who is currently not working for cash but ran her own beauty salon until her last child was born, argued:

> I may have to go back to work. We've made do and we've had times without much money. But it is hard on the children, they're getting older and they have more wants. They do have to work for things they want, but it's hard to make ends meet. I used my earnings to pay for groceries and to cover household costs. I won't give up my beautician's licence because I want to know I can always fall back on it if I have to.

These statements indicate potato farmers' wives' earnings can play a pivotal role in the family's standard of living. Pamela argued her efforts at farm diversification had helped 'even out bad years' although the year she was interviewed was not a particularly good year for beef prices. Phyllis's money goes 'back into the business' and Penny's money is used for her children's school lunches and extracurricular activities.

The ten farm wives who are no longer engaged in cash generating activities[6] also indicated their earnings had made an important contribution to the family farm and household finances. Again, however, a difference emerges in the rationale for such activities and the expenditure of earnings between commodity groups. Wives on dairy farms often worked in order to expand the farm operation while wives on potato farms generally worked to supplement the family income. As Dorothy, who recently gave up her full-time job, explained:

> Because I worked we were able to expand. We basically lived off my salary. We could stash the farm money to pay for farm things; and use my money to pay for household costs.

Deidre, who worked for seven years full-time before doing home based cash generating activities, recalled:

> When I worked, I pretty well maintained the house and my husband maintained the farm. It's a whole different situation now that I am not working. We just have the one income and there is less money there to spend. I tend to be pretty careful with spending.

Daisy described a similar scene:

> I worked for the first ten years, until my daughter was born. My money went into renovating the house, buying groceries, making car payments, paying for the phone and electricity. My money was being used for the house not the farm. My husband's money was going back into the farm.

Conversely, the wives of potato farmers were working in order to supplement their household income because they could not rely on the farm operation to provide enough income for household expenditures let alone expansion. For example, recall how

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[6] These women are: Daisy, Dawn, Delia, Denise, Donna, Dorothy, Barbara, Betty, Pearl and Phoebe.

Betty's income from selling eggs enabled her when necessary to invest in and make purchases for the farm while waiting for the potatoes to be marketed.

The final category in Table 5.1 shows an equal number of wives in both commodity sectors had not worked in cash generating activities once they married[7]. Among this group is Paula whose situation is of special interest since she is not working in cash generating activities but her husband is — he has a full-time unrelated farm job during the winter months. Furthermore, they treat his off farm salary as 'household' income like the farm wives on potato farms who work for cash, Paula explained:

> There's no guaranteed income and you'd really be in debt if you counted the hours you put in and took a salary. We don't take a salary from the farm. We try to live off the salary from my husband's other job. If I need to I will take money from the farm account but I like to keep it separate and not take money from the farm.

When her husband is working 'off the farm' she takes full responsibility for the farm operation thereby facilitating his ability to work elsewhere. Paula and her husband decided he should work for cash to supplement the family income rather than her because the family's economic return is higher as he earns more than she would working 'off the farm' and his off farm job is seasonal thereby not interfering with his farm work.

What is more noteworthy among the eight farms where wives have not been engaged in cash generating activities is that the four potato farms are more diversified than the four dairy farms. As Table 5.2 demonstrates overall potato farmers were more

Table 5.2: Farm Diversity

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Another business enterprise + additional agricultural products	5	0	5
Only main Commodity and related crops	2	9	10
Other agricultural products for commercial sale	7	7	15
Total	14	16	30

[7] This group of wives is: Diane, Dixie, Dolly, Dotty, Patricia, Paula, Posy and Priscilla.

likely to diversify their economic activities beyond farming than dairy farmers. In other words, like Paula's husband, potato farmers have attempted to have income from other sources besides the potato crop. They simply differ in how they have diversified their operations. Five potato farms have diversified by establishing other commercial enterprises in addition to their farm's main commodity production: two have trucking businesses, one has a machinery business, and two sell value-added products to the table stock market. Adding a second commercial enterprise helps buffer the irregularity of return from potato production, a point made by Phyllis when she said:

> Our trucking business has helped us even out the ups and downs.

On the other hand, this problem of an irregular income is not shared by dairy farmers; it is therefore not surprising that none of the dairy farmers in my study had off farm employment like Paula's husband nor had they established second businesses like these five potato farms.

Even more surprising is that half the dairy farms are engaged in only the farm's main commodity production — a situation shared by only two potato farms. In effect, fifty-six per cent of the dairy farms in my study relied solely on milk production for their livelihoods whereas only fourteen per cent of the potato farms relied solely on potato farming — and in this small group of potato farms is Peggy who works to maintain the family household; and Paige who baby-sits children after school. At the same time, the four wives on dairy farms who have never worked in cash generating activities are among the nine dairy farms which rely solely on milk production; while the four wives on potato farms who never worked in cash generating activities were on farms with other farm products or businesses.

Farm diversification and the presence of a second business have a twofold impact on farm wives' work. First, wives living on diversified farms often have less time or no time for their own cash generating activities because their labour is required either on the farm or in the non-farm business. Secondly, the other activities of the 'farm' mean income is being generated from other sources besides the farm's main commodity production. These two factors are important considerations for why some farm wives are not engaged in their own cash generating activities — especially since all four of the women on potato farms who were not working for cash had some career training and had worked in the paid labour force before getting married. Priscilla's comments are reflective of the others in this group:

> I went out and worked on the farm because we couldn't rely on hired labour — there was a lack of men in the area to do the work and my mother-in-law had always worked

> outside in field work so I went along too.... I was trained as a secretary and I worked for three years before getting married. But once I got married it was the end of working off the farm. I always regretted that I stopped working but I was needed worse on the farm. So what choice did I have?

Additionally, Table 5.2 indicates an equal number of potato and dairy farms have diversified their operations by producing additional farm products. This is a bit deceptive since the five farms with other businesses also produce additional farm products. Therefore, in actual fact eighty-five per cent of the potato farms in my study had additional foodstuffs for commercial sale while only forty-three per cent of the dairy farms had other farm products for commercial sale. Table 5.3 explains what these farms are producing or their 'commodity mix':

Table 5.3: Other Agricultural Products for Commercial Sale

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Grain and/or peas	4	0	4
Grain and beef	4	1	5
Beef/ Hay	2	2	4
Dairy/ Hay	1	0	1
Dairy/ Hay/ Eggs	1	0	1
Poultry	0	1	1
Beef/fruit/eggs	0	2	2
Hogs/beef/grains	0	1	1
Total	12	7	19

It is important to realise that it is not unusual for 'specialised' farms to be engaged in more than one agricultural activity. For example, dairy farms will not only be feeding and milking cows, they will also be growing clover and grasses for hay and silage and/or grains for feed. Similarly, potato farms frequently grow more than one crop to maximise production as the highest yields are achieved through a three year crop rotation. In effect, in order to achieve and maintain a good crop rotation potato farms need to have three times the arable land they are planting in potatoes each year. Many potato farms in New Brunswick grow potatoes one year, peas the next, and grains the following year on the same plot of land. Therefore it is not surprising that most of the potato farmers in my study have additional field crops to harvest. Only Peggy and Paige's potato farms are growing green manure crops, i.e. field crops which are ploughed back into the soil rather than being harvested. However, eight of the potato farms in my study are also involved in animal husbandry which means their farm production is less seasonal than might be expected on a potato farm: animals need to be tended to daily, unlike fields which lie fallow during the winter months. This means over fifty per cent of the potato farmers in my study are tied to the farm year round rather than on a seasonal basis. Meanwhile, all seven of the dairy farms which

have diversified their farm production are raising other animals as well as whatever field crops or fruit they produce for sale. Raising other animals is more of an extension of a dairy farmer's existing work hours since other animals, like cows, must be tended to daily.

Since potato farms are more diverse overall, farm wives on potato farms are likely to be involved in a wider range of activities, i.e. to be engaged in more varied farm work, than wives of dairy farmers. This is not to say, wives of potato farmers work more hours than wives of dairy farmers — in fact Smith (1987) found wives on dairy farms in Canada put in more hours in farm work than wives on other types of farms— rather it is to say they can be called upon to do a wider range of work than wives of dairy farmers. In other words, wives in different commodity groups may find themselves contributing to their husbands' jobs in different ways because of differences in the way their farms have been structured in order to respond to varying marketing arrangements.

Farms with a great deal of pluriactivity may require wives to be more flexible and more multi-skilled than farms producing only one commodity. This is certainly worth further investigation since the production of additional foodstuffs for commercial sale present in my study suggests farms are less specialised than the structural transformation literature and agricultural statistics portray. If farms are producing a mix of commodities then the variety of tasks to be done on particular family farms is likely to be far more diverse than researchers have realised. This would at least partly explain why farm women are found performing such a range of farm work activities — an issue we will explore further in the third section of this chapter.

Clearly, the way dairy farmers and potato farmers in New Brunswick are paid for their product differs. Dairy farms have a reliable and steady income based on their quota share. Potato farms have an uncertain and irregular annual income since they are dependent on fluctuating market conditions. As we have seen, these differences in how dairy farmers and potato farmers are paid for their work emerges as an important factor for establishing cash flow, household shopping patterns, and the extent to which farm wives will be engaged in their own cash generating activities in order to financially support the family household. Overall, farm wives on dairy farms experience much more economic security than wives on potato farms. Consequently wives on dairy farms are able to budget, plan and organise household expenditures with the knowledge of a steady and regular pay cheque; their cash generating activities tend to be sporadic; and they generally consider their earned income as a source for

'extra' purchases. Conversely, farm wives on potato farms do not know how much the farm will make from one year to the next. The farm and family household are often being run on a bank overdraft which produces a more cautious and careful approach to spending; and they view their cash generating activities as essential and necessary for the day to day running and upkeep of the family farm household. In summary, my case study data shows a commodity's marketing arrangements have a real and significant impact on a farm wife's standard of living, how family household finances are organised, how hard she will have to work and her involvement in cash generating activities.

B. What Needs to be done When?: Dealing with the Farm's Work Schedule

According to Finch (1983) and Delphy and Leonard (1992) a husband's work structures his wife's life not only in terms of her standard of living, where she lives, and the tasks she does, but also *the rhythms and patterns of her work life*. That is to say, *the amount of time* a wife will have available for work in various activities as well as *when* she will be available for such work is generally structured by her husband's job. As Delphy and Leonard explain:

> A wife is somewhat restricted — to employment and leisure activities which can be fitted into her husband's (work and leisure) timetable, his geography, and his personal needs, and the needs of other members of the family (Delphy and Leonard, 1992: 247).

In other words, wives organise their work activities so as not to interfere with the demands of their husbands' jobs. Luxton (1980) also made this point in her study of miners' wives in Flin Flon, Manitoba. She found miners' wives accommodated their husbands' shift work by keeping the children quiet and restricting 'noisy' housework during the day when husbands were sleeping so they could arrive refreshed for the night shift. In Luxton's case, wives were protecting husbands from disturbance so they could sleep; but wives can also protect husbands from disturbance in order that they may productively work at home (Delphy and Leonard, 1994: 160). As a wife shifts her work to accommodate her husband's job, whether it means letting him sleep in peace or work in peace, his work requirements begin to shape the pattern and rhythm of her life. Observing such behaviour led Delphy and Leonard (1992: 243) to argue:

> Household space and routines have to be organized around the husband's needs to allow him to carry out the breadwinning activities.

For example, the wife of a shift worker may have to vacuum during the daytime the week her husband works during the day; and then vacuum at night the week her

husband is working the night shift and needs to sleep during the day. When a wife rearranges her work activities to accommodate her husband's job, the requirements of his job effectively come to structure the work rhythms and patterns of her life.

My interviews with farm wives in New Brunswick indicate they too organise their family, farm, cash generating and leisure activities so as not to interfere with 'farm' life. However, as wives of dairy and potato farmers discussed their work schedules and activities it became evident they are dealing with substantially different work rhythms. In fact, the presence of different work rhythms on dairy and potato farms first became apparent to me as I set up my interviews with farm wives.

The wives of dairy farmers were interested in setting up interviews within a day or two of my initial phone call. They knew they would be 'on the farm' when the cows were scheduled to be milked and they had an idea of the commitments they had made for the coming days. The longest I waited for an interview among dairy farmers' wives was one week with the exception of Daisy who was ill when I first contacted her. However, when I contacted her a second time as agreed, the interview was scheduled for a few days hence. All of the interviews with dairy farmers' wives were conducted directly after the morning milking or prior to the evening milking. None occurred in the middle of the day or in the evening. Dairy farmers' wives knew they would be home immediately after or prior to milking and they scheduled our interview to coincide with when they would be there, but so as not to interfere with milking. I soon learned not to call wives of dairy farmers unless I was immediately available to go for an interview.

Quite a different scenario emerged when I called wives of potato farmers. With few exceptions, wives of potato farmers asked for interviews to be scheduled one to two weeks later; and my interview with Phoebe was scheduled a month in advance. Moreover, no general pattern emerged in terms of when the interviews with potato farmers' wives were scheduled, that is to say the interviews occurred in the early morning, afternoon and evening depending upon cash generating, household and volunteer work. For example, Paige had me come in the early afternoon as she would be home waiting for the school bus to deliver her own children and the children she baby-sat. Peggy scheduled our interview for one of her 'days off' and Penny agreed to be interviewed immediately after the school bus would have picked up her children. In other words, potato farmers' wives also fit me into their schedules but their daily schedules were routinised by other things besides farming since most of my interviews were conducted during the winter.

In fact, I had planned the timing of my interviews to be sensitive to the seasonality of potato farming, i.e. I did not call potato farmers' wives during the spring planting or the fall harvest. As I expected them to be 'free' from the demands of farming, I was surprised at the lead time potato farmers' wives required to set up an interview. I had simply not anticipated how family members, household responsibilities, cash generating and volunteer activities would structure their daily routines. That is not to say that dairy farmers' wives are not also contending with such work activities. They are. But, potato farmers' wives change and adapt their schedules each season while dairy farmers' wives contend with the demands of milking every day of the year.

On a dairy farm, the need to milk cows twice a day, three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, places a great deal of pressure on all members of the farm family. As Daphne explained, dairy farming is a 'family' commitment:

> [Switching from hogs to] milk was a big decision because it's so time consuming. It's a way of life not everyone can handle. There's lots who would be gone if they had to do what [we] do. Farm work has taken over our whole life since we switched to dairy. It really does place pressure on the marriage.

According to Dixie, who is no longer farming, the daily demands of dairy farming affected the schedules of everyone:

> The schedule was just exhausting. There was no relief from milking without it costing us a whole lot. You couldn't go anywhere without worrying about the need to get home in time for milking.

Dawn also expressed a sense of being 'tied' down to the daily demands of milking:

> Dairy farming is seven days a week with no free time. You have to live your life around the farm — it's what you've got to do — because cows need to be milked. You plan everything around the milking.

But perhaps it was Dayle who captured the long term effects of milking twice a day most strongly when she declared:

> I dislike being tied down with the milking. You can't do things with your friends because a cow will be calving or the milk schedule will keep us here. *It's like I've spent the last twenty-five years in jail* [my emphasis].

Other dairy farmers' wives did not liken daily milking to a jail sentence but they did all remark it was virtually impossible to escape the constant demands of milking. Even when there are other things the dairy farmer and his family would rather be doing, cows have to be milked, twice a day, every day.

In contrast, wives of potato farmers overwhelmingly discussed their work in terms of seasonal work schedules rather than daily ones. For instance, Phyllis told me:

> The fall and spring are the peak work periods on a potato farm; while winter is the slowest season.

Priscilla provided a more elaborate description of her potato farm's seasonal work activities:

> It is very hectic in the spring and fall, getting the crops in and out of the ground. In the summer we have a bit of a lull before the harvest....Now we have employees washing, grading and packing potatoes in the winter, so winters are a bit more hectic than they used to be.

In fact, Penny revealed getting used to the seasonal nature of potato farming and the varying work rhythms it entails was one of the hardest adjustments she had to make when she married her husband:

> The hardest thing has been to adjust to the busy season. The fall is the hardest time. Last year my husband was away [in another county where their potato fields are located] for six solid weeks so I had to do all the work here by myself. But even if he is here, he just comes in and goes to sleep. He's so tired after a day of harvesting.

Likewise Pearl found potato farming took some getting used to:

> When I came here I wasn't attuned to the family farm hours and cropping. It takes a while to get used to getting up and going at the drop of a hat.

The above statements reveal it is the farm's commodity production which creates the rhythms and tempo of life on a particular family farm. In the 'mixed' subsistence farms of yesteryear such differences were not as evident as most family farms were raising a similar variety of animals and crops fostering a more or less common work rhythm among all family farms. But, rather than accommodating a variety of tasks as mixed farms do, today's specialised farms are increasingly geared to the tempo of one commodity sector. As farmers organise their labour around the needs of one commodity sector their 'farming' jobs become more and more distinctive[8].

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[8] In the previous section we saw the potato farms in my sample are more diverse than the dairy farms. Of course, producing more than one commodity requires farmers and their families to adapt to multiple production schedules which is why Friedland (1991) refers to the 'commodity mix' in his discussions. Even though eight, just over half, of the potato farms in my study were also raising animals, among these wives only Barbara and Betty who have dairy cows indicated caring for animals 'tied' them to the farm. I would argue there are two factors at play. One, beef cattle, chickens and turkeys do not have to be cared for on a rigid schedule like dairy cows. They must be fed and cared for every day but there is a window for flexibility. Secondly, most potato farmers' wives are not responsible for animal husbandry because many of these potato farms in my sample are inter- and intra- generational farms which means there is more 'male' labour available to do the work. This second point will be pursued in the next section. At this stage I want to report on the contrasting work schedules, rhythms and patterns of dairy and potato farming rather than analyse differences within each commodity sector.

Dairy and potato farmers' jobs differ in terms of the number of hours they are called upon to work and when exactly their work needs to be done. Current production practices on New Brunswick dairy farms result in a twice daily routine of caring for, feeding, and milking cows, three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. In contrast, potato production is a more seasonal activity since New Brunswick's climate will only support one potato crop a year. The potato crop is planted in the spring, maintained during the summer, harvested in the fall, and generally marketed during the winter months[9].

Farmers' wives are very aware of their commodity sector's work requirements and the subsequent work rhythms and patterns which emerge for their farmer husbands and themselves. Differences in their husbands' 'farming' jobs produce differences between the work rhythms and patterns of farm wives living and working on farms producing different commodities. For example, wives of dairy farmers must contend with the daily demands of milking while wives of potato farmers must deal with distinct, 'seasonal', work periods. Caring for and milking cows ties dairy farmers and their families to the farm operation in a way potato farming does not. On the other hand, the annual cycle of work on a potato farm results in different labour requirements and work schedules for each season, which in turn produce distinct work periods for potato farmers and their families. These differences in what needs to be done, and when it needs to be done, create different situations for dairy and potato farmers and their families.

As farm wives deal with their commodity's particular work rhythms the overall rhythms and pattern of their work life is affected. Moreover, wives efforts to accommodate their husbands' particular work schedules can lead to the need to reconcile conflicting timetables and schedules within the family, as Janet Finch points out:

> ...family life can be seen as a series of overlapping and interacting timetables, with which wives in particular have to juggle (Finch, 1983: 24).

This would certainly appear to be true for farm wives. As we saw in Chapter Four, farm wives are juggling multiple schedules on the 'family' farm where both family and farm are competing for their attention. Chapter Four illustrated farm wives take primary responsibility for child care and almost sole responsibility for household

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[9] Some processing and table stock potatoes will be sold early while some seed and table stock — and even processing — potatoes can be sold as late as May and June the following year.

tasks; at the same time they are often actively engaged in their husbands' farm work. Some farm wives even argued children's extracurricular activities were a 'family affair' since they required a commitment from the whole family to ensure children were taxied to and from events. Importantly for the overall pattern of farm wives' work, their 'family' responsibilities do not tend to be eliminated when they take on farm work or the cash generating activities outlined in the previous section.

This reality of overlapping schedules and multiple work spheres means farm wives can be juggling a large number of schedules and a large range of activities in a given day. Moreover, what they are expected to deal with changes substantially with the different kinds of farms they live on, a point which has generally been neglected in the study of farm women's work. While numerous studies have acknowledged farm wives are engaged in a plethora of activities on the farm, in the household, and off the farm (both for cash and as volunteers), none have really considered how participating in one range of activities might possibly restrict a farm wife's participation in another set of activities. Such an omission is surprising since there is a finite amount of time available in a given day. Therefore, expecting farm wives to be fully engaged in all spheres of work is not entirely realistic.

Some of the literature reviewed in Chapter Three does implicitly recognise there are real limits on women's time. One approach has been for researchers to promote one spatial work sphere over another: for example recall how Olfert *et. al.* (1992) advocate the 'rational alternative' for farm wives is to work in paid employment rather than engage in farm work. In this same vein a vast amount of research on farm women has been overwhelmingly committed to documenting their varying participation in and contributions to farming rather than studying their overall work patterns. A second approach has been to ascertain why farm women are engaged in one set of activities rather than another. As previously stated the three explanations which have emerged are: one, varying patterns in farm wives' work activities can be attributed to their various stages in the family and/or farm business cycle (Gasson and Errington, 1993; Keating and Munro, 1988); two, variations in women's farm, household, cash generating and volunteer work are a consequence of socio-personal differences (Olfert *et. al.*, 1992; Ross, 1990); and three, differences in farm wives' work patterns reflect broader societal and agricultural industry changes (Ghorayshi, 1989; Leckie, 1993; Shaver, 1991).

Interestingly, whether or not, and if so how, a husband's farming job structures the amount of time a wife has available for work or when exactly she is available to work

has not been considered as a factor affecting farm wives' overall work patterns. In essence, researchers have failed to ask whether or not a husband's farming job impacts on his wife's participation in particular spatial work spheres in terms of both **when** she is available to work and **how much** time she has available to pursue various work activities.

My case study data suggests differences between dairy and potato farms in terms of what, and when, work needs to be done does indeed affect farm wives' overall work patterns. First of all, **what** farm work wives are called upon to do reflects their farm's commodity sector. Farms specialising in potatoes are not going to be asking farm wives to milk cows. Likewise specialised dairy farms are not going to be planting and harvesting acres of potatoes. Secondly, **when** farm wives are called upon to do farm work depends on both their level of participation in farm work, i.e. the jobs they are willing and able to do, *and* their farm commodity's particular work rhythms. For example, potato farmers in New Brunswick will not be harvesting the potato crop in February when the fields are covered in several feet of snow, so neither will their wives be involved in such work at that time of the year. That is to say, regardless of their level of involvement in farm production, wives of potato farmers will not be called upon to do 'harvest' work in the winter because neither will their farmer husbands be doing such work. A major contrast between potato and dairy farming is that over the course of the year the work to be done on a potato farm changes substantially but on a dairy farm cows must be tended to and milked on a daily basis. Dairy farming, therefore, has a relentless character in terms of its work requirements which potato farming does not share.

On a dairy farm, the daily work rhythms are dictated by milking — because on a dairy farm no matter what else you are doing you must stop and milk the cows at milking times[10]. As a result, it is the milking which structures **when** farmers and/or their wives will be in the barn caring for and/or milking the herd. For example, Dotty indicated:

> I milk in the morning and the evening. It definitely shapes my day. I have to be here and I work everything else around it....

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[10] For those who are unfamiliar with cows, their bellows will bring the 'farmer' to the barn (and/or calls from the neighbourhood) should by some odd coincidence the 'farmer' forget it is milking time.

Daisy also does both the morning and evening milking which requires her to be 'at home' by the early afternoon. In the mornings she has to juggle milking cows with getting her daughter off to school:

> At 6:30 a.m. I go out to the barn and crowd the cows down into the waiting area. I turn on the automatic barn cleaner and put the sanitiser through the pipes. Then I come in and get my daughter ready for school. Once she leaves to wait for the bus, I go back out and help [our herdsman] with the milking.

Likewise, Debra and Diane plan their daily schedules around the milking schedule as they are the person primarily responsible for at least one of the daily milkings. In other words, on a daily basis, these four wives are doing the milking *instead of* their husbands. Another eight wives of dairy farmers described working *alongside* their husbands by either participating in barn work and/or milking on a fairly regular basis. Regardless of their level of involvement in farm work, all the dairy farmers' wives in my study repeatedly indicated that their family, farm and work life were predominantly organised around daily milking.

In comparison, wives of potato farmers did not describe their work schedules in relation to daily farm work requirements. Instead it became evident potato farmers' wives adjust their work activities and schedules to meet the potato crops seasonal work requirements. For example, Patricia divulged:

> When it's harvesting time, I can't go off and do things. I must stay by the farm so I can be here to do things if they want me to fill in or help out at the last minute.

Perdita also made this point:

> In the fall my husband is never home. I can't take off and go on trips — like shopping trips — because you never know how busy you'll be or if they'll need you for something.

Paula, like many other potato farmers' wives in my study, described how her schedule varies over the course of a year:

> At particular moments [during the year], the farm is the focus. At other times, the family and the house. But potatoes always take priority over cleaning. I cook and freeze casseroles and baked goods ahead so I won't have to stop and cook during the busy seasons. It's very hectic [in the spring and fall] and I only have time when we're planting and harvesting to just pull things out of the freezer and pop them into the oven.

Paige told a similar story:

> When I know spring is coming I begin making cookies, doughnuts, casseroles, soups and stews, all the things I can take from the freezer and shove in the oven. I start preparing the cooking six to eight weeks in advance because I won't have time to cook once we start selling our seed and planting.

Both Paula and Paige live on seed farms and they are very active in farm work. Besides the need to adjust their domestic activities to accommodate farm work, their comments also suggest on seed potato farms spring planting is just as busy a time of year as the fall harvest, since spring is not only their own planting season but also when their seed crop from the year before is being sold to other farmers. Of course, fall does remain a peak period of work on their seed potato farms because to have a crop to sell in the spring requires a successful fall harvest.[11]

Even though the spring and fall are the most demanding time periods on a potato farm, the other seasons are not work or stress free. During the summer months the potato crop needs to be maintained and in the winter it needs to be marketed — while these periods tend to be less labour intensive work periods, they can still be high stress periods as keeping the crop healthy depends on external factors like the weather and selling the crop depends on external markets and/ or meeting government regulations. These factors can affect the overall stress level of family members as Priscilla explained:

> Growing for McCains was nerve-racking. They would send you home with your full load and it would be 40 below, where were you going to put it [overnight so the potatoes wouldn't freeze]? My husband would get very upset over things. Now we sell our [table stock] potatoes in the United States and at the US border we've been harassed, crawled over and held under a magnifying glass when we try to take our product into the US. They are trying to find any excuse they can to send us home with our potatoes. It does get to you.

Other potato farmers' wives made similar comments which suggests each season, has its own particular worries and stresses associated with it on a potato farm. On potato farms, adjusting to the varying tasks and demands of potato farming from one season to the next produces peaks and valleys in wives' farm work.

Interestingly, dairy farmers' wives must also deal with peaks and valleys in the annual work schedule. While the fall is the peak season for potato farms, the summer is the peak season for dairy farms. Even though three-quarters of the dairy farmers' wives in my study generally participate in farm work on a daily basis, all dairy farmers' wives described the summer months as a more intensive work period. It is

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[11] But it is worth noting, the 'seasonal' work requirements of a seed potato farm can vary from those of other kinds of potato farms. A point worth remembering as we study the work rhythms of particular commodity sectors since the tendency may be to view each commodity sector as having uniform work rhythms, when this may not be the case: obviously differences in work rhythms within commodity sectors is a complicating factor for studying the effects of commodity on farm wives' work.

during the summer that dairy farms must grow and harvest their hay, silage and grains for winter, even so cows must continue to be milked on schedule. Adding field work to already existing barn work creates a very intensive work period during the summer months on dairy farms. According to Debbie this means:

> We never take time off in the summer....The summers are farm focused. While others are enjoying the summer, we're sweating through it. Being on a dairy farm we're always tied down, we're not free to come and go as you might be.

Dotty also revealed: "The summer is definitely the busiest time". As a result, wives of dairy farmers frequently take over the milking during the summer 'haying' season to alleviate their husbands of the pressures of additional farm work. In fact, almost all the women in my study, at one time or another, did milking during the summer haying season in order to 'free up' their husbands for field work. For example, Dorothy, Denise and Delia indicated they had increased milking responsibilities during the 'hay' season. Delia stated, "I'm milking when hays going in". In the summer, Dolly does the milking with her children while Dotty reflected:

> A good many nights I have done all the milking myself because everybody else is out haying; with only one person it takes another hour just for the milking then you have to feed the animals and clean them out on top of the milking.

Dayle also related "I do all the milking in the summer by myself when they are doing haying and silage". Donna explained:

> I have longer work days in the summer. My labour is crucial. I am planting crops, helping with silage, haying and harvesting field crops. I'll also come in and do the milking so my husband can stay in the fields.

Debra told a similar tale:

> I do fieldwork in the summer but I come in and do the milking and look after the calves because you should have the same person doing it every day. The cows get used to your voice. They like routine.

As did Diane:

> I've done just about every kind of work that needs to be done in the summer. I used to do all the milking during hay time. But our efforts to have milking done by one person haven't worked since we expanded so it takes at least two of us to stop and do the milking.

Meanwhile Debbie confided:

> I do more milking in the summer when my husband and his brothers are doing field work. At that time there is nobody else but us girls to spell each other off from milking.

While dairy farmers' wives fill in for 'absent', i.e. otherwise occupied, husbands and workers during the summer haying season, the potato farmers' wives in my study often found themselves working as 'flexible' workers during the fall harvest. Subsequently in both commodity sectors, farm wives are called upon to participate in their husbands' farm work as 'additional workers' during their respective 'busy' seasons.

In fact, potato farmers' wives reported they are most likely to be asked to 'fill in' for absent workers, go for parts, co-ordinate workers and provide meals during the fall harvest compared to any other time of the year. Their ability to make themselves available for work, as 'flexible' or additional workers during the fall harvest helps ensure the crop will be harvested and stored in a timely and orderly manner since it is at this time potato farms are contending with additional employees and the precariousness of the weather as they work to 'get their crop out of the ground'.

Year after year potato farmers do the same sequential sets of tasks which produces a very cyclical annual work schedule. Adjusting to the demands of the different rhythms and tempos of work from one season to another is repeated year after year. That is to say, potato farmers' wives are called upon year after year to assist and 'help out' with farm work. To outward appearances wives of potato farmers are irregular participants in farm work when compared to dairy farmers' wives who may be participating in farm work on a daily basis. Potato farmers' wives are, however, contributing to their husbands' farming job in a regular and consistent fashion. In other words, wives of potato farmers are doing farm work when their husbands' farming job dictates — which happens to be on a cyclical, annual basis rather than a daily one.

Even though both dairy and potato farming encounter peaks and valleys in production, i.e. periods of intense work activity matched by periods of slower and more routine tasks, dairy cows continue to require constant daily attention when the potato crop, at least in principle, experiences a lull in production. Given these fundamental differences in work rhythms, it is not surprising to find dairy farmers' wives do more farm work in absolute terms than farm wives in other commodity sectors (Smith, 1987); or that farm wives on livestock farms do more farm work than farm wives on field crop farms (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Wives of potato farmers are generally spending less time in farm work than wives of dairy farmers because there is less farm work to do in absolute terms. Animals simply require more attention over the course of the year than field crops; *ipso facto* farm wives on

livestock farms are asked to do more farm work. Under these circumstances, viewing farm wives who contribute fewer overall hours to their husbands' farming job simply as 'helpers', and/or their participation in farming as inconsequential, is to misunderstand the nature of their family farms and their husbands' job requirements. From this perspective, farm wives varying contributions to farming can just as easily be attributed to differences in their husbands' farming job as to differences in farm wives' commitment to farming.

In addition to affecting a wife's farm work pattern, i.e. when and how much time she can be expected to devote to farming, the pace and tempo of farming a particular commodity also affects her domestic work. Wives in both commodity sectors revealed that their household work is usually done in such a way so as to accommodate farm work. Deidre was one of the wives who was very explicit about the way farming structured her domestic work:

> As a farm wife I adjust to their schedules. They can't be sitting around waiting for me to get meals ready or to do things I've agreed to do. We are busy twenty-four hours a day....I don't have a whole afternoon to do something in the house so I adjust my schedule to fit household things in when I can.

Patricia made the same point as Deidre:

> Somebody has to get the meals and have them ready when they want them. The meal has to be ready. It's better I wait for them then they wait for me. They can't be waiting for me to get the meal ready.

Nevertheless there is a difference here which may not be readily apparent: Deidre is discussing her daily work schedule while Patricia is reflecting on her work during the fall harvest. In fact, many potato farmers' wives found meal preparation very demanding during the fall harvest since they had to shift their normal meal time practices. For instance, Perdita commented:

> In the fall my husband is never home. I take his lunch to him in the field but I refuse to take cooked meals to the field like my mother-in-law does. I take sandwiches and things like that but she takes full meals. She's very committed to her husband, he has to be there to unload that truck and she brings him the same meal he'd get at home. I won't do that.

Nevertheless, she does take meals to her husband so he will not have to leave his work which, since she has young children, requires her to pack up the children and take them with her to deliver his meal. While Perdita re-arranges her domestic activities to facilitate her husband's farming work, Paige adjusts her farm work so she can accommodate her domestic responsibilities:

> In the morning I work in the fields on the harvester. In the afternoon, I come in and stay in charge of the potato house — that job is a great responsibility with no pay. But being at the potato house means I can shuffle back and forth between the potato house and the house to get an afternoon snack ready for all the workers [and my family] and supper too.

Both wives are responding to the demands of farming. However their level of involvement in farm work differs, therefore what they are required to do differs: Perdita takes meals to the field whereas Paige does farm work close to the house so she can combine both work schedules.

Generally potato farmers' wives view the spring planting and fall harvest as a disruption to their 'normal' daily schedules. Potato farmers' wives tended to highlight meal times or children's schedules as the defining parameters of their 'normal' daily domestic life. For example, Phoebe indicated:

> Meals is what I mostly organise my day around.

The departure and arrival of the children's school bus and their extracurricular activities shaped most potato farmers' wives schedules.

In contrast, daily milking times tended to establish the pattern of domestic life on dairy farms. The impact of dairy farming on domestic life was especially evident in discussions of family meals. For example, Debra told me:

> Meals are planned around milking but some times you're called away or things take longer. So you have to learn how to keep meals warm without killing them.

Meanwhile Donna confirmed the impact of milking on her daily schedule:

> Meals and milking structure my day.

Daily schedules — including meal preparation — can, however, be hard to sustain during the summer haying season. As Dawn pointed out:

> Since coming to the farm, my day is no longer my own. I never know what's going to happen or what I'll be called on to do. The winter is more predictable in terms of schedules. The summers are harder because they don't always stop for meals — especially if they're trying to finish something before dark.

Debra also recalled:

> Sometimes in the summer I send dinner and supper to the fields so they won't have to stop what they're doing and come in and eat.

Nevertheless, during most of the year, dairy farmers' wives have a very clear notion of what their husbands will be doing and when, as Delia said:

> My husband doesn't tell us [her and the children] what is going on. We just know his routine. We know what he'll be doing at any given point.

Overall, dairy farmers' wives described their daily routines in relation to the farm's twice daily milking schedule. Milking ties dairy farmers and their wives physically to the farm. This job requirement in turn promotes a relatively even distribution of farm and family responsibilities over the course of the year. Something not accomplished today may be added to tomorrow's work schedule. Only during the short summer haying season, as farm wives accommodate additional farm work, do domestic schedules go completely awry on dairy farms[12].

In contrast, potato farmers' wives reported peaks and valleys in their domestic work similar to those found in commodity production. For example, Paige told me her participation in farm work makes it difficult at certain times of the year to get housework done:

> The household is hard to keep on top of in the spring [when we are selling the seed crop and preparing to plant our own potatoes]. I am out in the potato house all day and when we come in to eat and get things the mud comes right in with you....Put it this way, I wouldn't win any good housekeeping awards.

At certain times of the year, the needs of the farm will take priority, forcing farm wives to adjust their domestic activities accordingly, as Paula revealed:

> Through the course of the year, the farm is the focus. At other times, it is the family and the house.

Meanwhile Pearl argued:

> I find it's a balancing act between the family, farm and community. I feel like I am losing my flexibility since I started working in the farm office.

Wives of potato farmers are thus aware of the need to adapt their domestic and farm work schedules from season to season as the needs of the farm change, while dairy farmers' wives are acutely aware of the way milking structures their daily lives.

As noted in Chapter Three, most studies of farm women's work have preferred to focus on their farm, cash generating and volunteer work rather than their domestic activities. According to Smith (1987), researchers have avoided studying farm

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[12] It should be noted that wives in both commodity sectors must deal with additional child care responsibilities during the summer months as children have a two month holiday from school. Wives of dairy farmers reported milking with 'children in tow' therefore the incidence of working with children is likely to be higher during these summer months when children are home.

women's domestic work by arguing urban and rural farm women are doing the same work[13]. A penchant of such thinking extends to the assumption farm women are doing the same work, with the same schedules, irrespective of the kinds of farms they live on or where they live. This approach fails to detect the very real ways farm wives' domestic lives differ. The above discussion, though brief, of the differing effects of a dairy and potato farmer's job on the rhythms and patterns of his wife's domestic work at the very least suggests a missed research opportunity. I would argue farm wives' domestic labour must be taken more seriously in order to fully appreciate how farming affects their overall work patterns as well as the breadth and scale of their contribution to farming — I will return to this latter point in the next section of this chapter.

As we might expect, a husband's farming job also structures when and how much time farm wives have available for cash generating activities. The previous section documented wives of dairy farmers spend less time in cash generating activities than wives of potato farmers. Of course, wives cash generating activities are strongly mediated by both financial need and employment opportunities; and as we saw in the last section, dairy farms have a more stable income than potato farms. Consequently, dairy farmers' wives are able to rely on their husbands' incomes in a way which potato farmers' wives can not, which at least partially explains why dairy farmers' wives spend less time in cash generating activities. However, my data suggests the work rhythms associated with producing different commodities also affects farm wives' cash generating work. Wives of dairy farmers — especially if they are active in farm work — have less time to devote to cash generating work than wives of potato farmers because their farm's commodity production demands more of their total time. For example, Donna used to work as a supply teacher filling in for absent teachers. However, she decided this cash generating work was too sporadic and didn't provide enough income for the disruption it caused in the family farm schedule. She decided it would be better for her to commit her time and labour to the 'family' farm in order to reduce the farm's labour costs. But Donna is still interested in having her own cash generating job, the trouble is finding one which doesn't interfere with her commitment to farm work:

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[13] To my knowledge, Reimer (1985) is one of the few authors to make domestic work an integral part of study. He compares the domestic work of urban and rural women. It would be interesting to have more comparative data on rural women versus farm women. Unfortunately, McKinley-Wright (1995) who does examine the domestic work of rural women and farm women, chooses to lump their experiences together in her final analysis making it difficult to draw conclusions about differences in their domestic work experiences.

> My ideal would be to find a part-time job that fits into the farm. It couldn't be a full-time job that meant working through the summer. We'd have to hire another person to do the farm work I do and my husband would have to work longer hours so it wouldn't be worth it for me to work instead of doing farm work.

Delia was also among the dairy farmers' wives who used to be engaged in cash generating work but wasn't at the time of the interview. She told me her last job had demanded ten hours a day making it too demanding with 'family' farm responsibilities:

> That job had to go. I couldn't afford the time for that job. I liked doing the work but it was too many hours with a family and the farm.

Dolly who has never been involved in cash generating work confided:

> I would like to do something for pay in the winter time but not the summer time. In the summer time I am too busy and I like my work on the farm. But in the winter, I am less busy. It would be a nice break.

Also recall how Debra works as a cashier at Christmas time if it doesn't "interfere with farm work". In short, these dairy farmers' wives are very aware of the farm schedule and the restrictions it places on their cash generating work. Their discussion of farm work and cash generating work insinuates they can only be heavily engaged in one or the other — a finite amount of time does not permit them to easily accommodate work in both spatial work spheres.

Potato farmers' wives did not make the same claims. First of all, potato farmers' wives in my study were working more hours in cash generating work than dairy farmers' wives. Secondly, potato farmers' wives did not directly view farm work as a restriction to their own cash generating work. Instead, they viewed their cash generating work as being restricted by 'good' employment opportunities or the lack of child care options. For example, Perdita has been working part-time rather than full-time since her children were born and she would like to work more hours than she currently does:

> I couldn't find a sitter to work my full-time hours and I couldn't rely on my husband because you'd never know where he'd be. When the children are in school I'll probably go back to work full-time. My husband sees me working full-time.

Her husband's farming job only indirectly affects her cash generating work since his farming schedule causes him to be unreliable in terms of child care; moreover, she has been unsuccessful in securing an alternative. It is clear that Perdita remains the primary care giver and she must adapt her cash generating work schedule to family needs in a way which her husband does not. Interestingly, Perdita's final comment suggests her husband will facilitate her working on a full-time basis, i.e. he will help ensure she has

the time available at the necessary times to work full-time, once the children are school age and require less supervision.

Delphy and Leonard (1994) argue wives time can be made available for activities if and when husbands want their wives' time to be used in a certain way. Phyllis's cash generating work history supports their claim:

> I worked in a bank the first five years [of our marriage] until the children were born. Then I didn't work until the children were in school. When they were in school I worked as a secretary during their school hours. I stopped working a few years ago to work full-time as a secretary in my husband's [diversified farm] business.

In effect, as the family changes and her husband's work changes, so too does Phyllis's cash generating work. Her schedule could be and was adjusted over the years to meet family and farm needs. Other farm wives described similar adjustments in their cash generating work schedules. For instance, Dawn, who lives on a mixed farm, set up her business at home so she could divide her time between farm sales and her own cash generating work:

> I set up my hair dressing salon in the house so I could be here. You had to be here all the time to make the sales when the people stopped. You had to stop what you were doing and make the sale...we used to sell apples, eggs and milk too until the government clamped down on it.

Similarly, Phoebe is working at home in order to accommodate varying schedules:

> With children I had to work around their schedules as well as around the farm schedule; so it was easier to do that by setting up my business at home. I could control my work hours better and still be here to do things for the children and the farm.

Phoebe's farm has beef cattle as well as potatoes which means their farm is accommodating varying work rhythms. The presence of several farm commodities on mixed family farms can mean there is simply less time available for all cash generating work. A point made by Priscilla when she reflected on her work schedule when they produced both milk and potatoes:

> In the summer we have a bit of a lull before the harvest. But that lull wasn't there when we had the cattle and dairy. At that time we'd be haying square bales of hay in June and July. Then in August, the garden would be ready to freeze and can. So there was always something to be done.

Priscilla's comment also demonstrates 'mixed' farms have more activities to do than specialised farms. When her farm was a more 'mixed' farm operation, Priscilla had a more varied work schedule than currently occurs on their now much more specialised potato farm. Farms which therefore try to be less reliant on one crop for their family's

income will have a wider range of tasks to do which in turn results in different work schedules and rhythms for farms with varying commodity combinations.

Whatever their commodity or commodity mix, farm wives are juggling family and farm schedules with their cash generating work. Before farm wives commit themselves to cash generating work they weigh the needs of the family and the farm with their own employment opportunities. What cash generating activities they are able to do is at least partially determined by their involvement in their husbands' farm work and the demands it makes on them in terms of their time. Paige, for example, was trained as a nurse but the nearest hospital is two hours drive away. She decided to commit her time to farm work thereby cutting the farm's labour costs and she fits cash generating work, like baby-sitting, around her farm work. Her course of action is rationalised when she states:

> Successful farmers' wives are out working [full-time for cash] but it just wouldn't pay for us.

Priscilla made a similar point:

> Once I married, it was the end of my working off the farm. I always regretted it but I was needed worse on the farm.

In other words, there are many factors affecting wives' involvement in cash generating work — from the need for cash to the amount of time wives have committed to farming, conflicting family schedules and farm wives' subsequent availability for such work.

Dairy farming would, however, appear to place more constraints on farm wives in terms of the amount of time they have available because the daily demands of milking are a more frequent, more labour intensive and more pressing task than the seasonal work schedules of potato farming. As Dayle said, the daily demands of milking "sentences" the farmer and his family to the rhythms of commodity production on a continuous basis, twice a day, 365 days a year. By contrast, potato production "frees" farmers and their families for longer periods of time which enables them to adopt daily schedules more of their own choosing. The constraints of potato farming are thus much easier to "work around" when planning and organising cash generating work making farming's demands less of an obstacle than it is for dairy farmers' wives seeking cash generating work. At the same time, the need for cash is less acute on dairy farms since they have a guaranteed income and a steady pay cheque. Undoubtedly these two factors — how and how much a husband gets paid and his work rhythms — in combination affect farm wives' cash generating work. Differences

in both areas produce marked differences in farm wives' cash generating work on dairy and potato farms.

The farm's work rhythms, i.e. their husband's farming job, affect another area of farm wives' lives: their leisure and volunteer community work. Farm wives repeatedly revealed 'family' leisure — in terms of when it occurs and how much time is available for it — is influenced by the farm's work rhythms and requirements. On dairy farms, the constancy of daily milking can not be escaped and it impinges on every aspect of family life including moments of leisure, as Dixie so vividly recalls:

> I resented that the barn took priority on days like Christmas. You'd have to time Christmas dinner to coincide with the milking.

Potato farmers' wives do not express a similar level of intrusion from farming into their leisure activities though Phyllis argued:

> It is hard to plan when there's no fixed vacation time or income.

On the whole, wives of potato farmers reported having more vacation time and physical breaks from the farm, such as spending time at the cottage, than dairy farmers' wives.

Dairy farmers' wives again and again told me it was hard to physically and mentally leave the farm for any length of time. Daphne explained:

> With dairy farming, there are no holidays or no breaks. I miss going out, and sometimes I wish we could get away from it all but it's a commitment. We did go away for one weekend about eight years ago and we worried the whole time we were away.

Diane said:

> We never take vacations. We will take family time and go camping about fifteen miles away but then my husband or I can come back and do the milking in the morning and the evening. We don't go away often. You need people who know what's going on. It's always there in your mind. You can't leave it. So we end up calling home in the morning and evening if we do go away somewhere other than camping.

Daisy reiterated this point:

> We don't have a vacation. You're farming year round. In the summers there's haying to do, you're always going.

The most common approach to family leisure on dairy farms was to go away for a weekend once or twice a year. Interestingly, some dairy farmers' wives, notably Dolly, Dorothy and Dayle have resolved the dilemma of farm responsibilities versus family leisure by vacationing on their own. As Dorothy elaborated:

> Five years ago my husband and I took a ten day vacation together, then last June he took five days off. Other than that he is milking seven days a week unless his father does the evening milking so we can have the odd night out. My solution has been to take a separate vacation. I go somewhere every year. It would be nice to go with him but he won't leave the farm.

Dolly and Dayle both emigrated to Canada and they take a vacation alone each year in order to 'return home' and visit their family.

Potato farmers' wives expressed similar scenarios to these dairy farmers' wives; but there does seem to be a fundamental difference between the two groups in that potato farmers' wives reported physically getting away from the farm more than dairy farmers' wives. For example, Perdita told me:

> We haven't taken any vacations. My husband says its too hard to get away. We went camping once *and we go to the cottage every summer* [my emphasis].

Similarly Phoebe reasoned:

> We don't take vacations. We have a cottage at the lake where we spend the summers. This year I would like to go away but I don't know if finances will allow it.

Moving to the cottage for several weeks during the summer permits potato farmers and their families to commute back to the farm on an as needed basis — they may still mentally be at work but they are physically removed from the farm.

Family finances appear to be a contributing factor to whether or not potato farmers and their families will be able to enjoy a family holiday. Paige, for instance, said:

> We don't normally have a vacation because we can't afford to get away more than a few days in the summer. But this year we went south for two weeks in the winter.

Pamela and Paula both dream about getting away more but both time and money appear to be factors which limit their ability to travel. For instance Pamela mused:

> It would be nice to just get on a cruise and get away from it all. We try to get away together but it's usually just a spur of the moment thing. Usually I travel with farm related issues and my husband is on the road a lot with his trucking business.

While Paula contended:

> I would like to travel more than we do. I'd like to take an annual trip but we can't afford it. Maybe I'll be able to when we retire.

Also noteworthy is that wives in both commodity sectors reported taking 'vacations' which encompassed 'farm' work or going on farm tours. For instance, Pearl stated:

> Sometimes we get away for farm related activities like agricultural fairs or farm meetings in another city and we've had a few family vacations. We do get away to visit my family a few times a year but I wouldn't mind getting away on a family vacation more often.

Mixing work and leisure seems to be quite common. Daisy revealed:

> We get away to a fair for three days every year. I take cattle to show so it's really a working holiday. That's the only time I'm away.

Dawn insisted:

> We never took vacations. You'd go on picnics or to ball games but you had to be back in time for milking. Everything was planned around milking, it had to be. There was nobody else to do it. Then two years ago we went to Australia for twenty-one days on a farm tour. Our son looked after the farm.

Debra also reported a 'family' vacation spent touring dairy barns, as did Dayle. Posy also described combining farm interests with leisure.

Farm wives' 'family' leisure is thus affected by their husbands' farming jobs — not only in terms of when and how much time they have available for leisure but also **what** they do. Farm tours, country fairs and farm related conferences may enable family members to physically leave the farm but they surely take their work with them on such occasions. Of all the farm wives in my study, only Debbie, who lives on an intragenerational family farm, relayed having regular vacation time:

> [All the brothers] are entitled to two weeks vacation a year and the weekends off. We always take our vacation in January or February, maybe the first week of March. The summers are farm focused so we don't take our vacation then. We usually go away somewhere warm every winter.

Most farm wives must cope with the constraints their husbands' jobs place on their family leisure. For dairy farmers' wives it is the daily demands of milking which confine the amount of time available for vacations as well as the way their statutory holidays are structured; while for potato farmers' wives it is the lack of financial resources which curbs family vacations. The outcome may be similar in that dairy and potato farmers' wives both may not have the family vacations they aspire to have, but the cause is not: dairy farmers' wives are dealing with time constraints while potato farmers' wives are dealing with financial constraints.

The work rhythms of their respective farming jobs also influences farm wives' volunteer community work. In Chapter One, Betty argued it was hard for community members to understand the difficulty she had participating in community events as she needed to be home at milking time. On the other hand Barbara's husband contended she was too involved in community work as it was taking her time away from farm

issues. According to Barbara she adjusts her volunteer work so it will not interfere with farm work, i.e. she does most of her volunteer work in the winter months when less farm work is taking place. Like Barbara, Dayle adjusts her volunteer work to the farm by "doing less volunteer work in the summer". Similarly, Dolly confines her volunteer work to the winter; while others like Denise restricted their overall amount of volunteer work. Given the finite amount of time available to farm wives in both commodity sectors — and the range of tasks they do — it is hardly surprising many of the wives in my study found it difficult to participate in community work at all. If their schedules become too overburdened, community work is most likely to be affected, for example, Phoebe felt:

> I've been doing too much volunteer work, this year I've done so much I've gotten behind in my cleaning and housework, so I've pulled back.

Overall, all the farm wives in my study had done some volunteer work at one time or another during their married life. The amount of time they dedicated to community events varied greatly among the respondents and was subject to change within the women's own life times reflecting ongoing changes in their families and their farms. For example, many of the farm wives were active in parent-teacher organisations when their children were school age — for some, this meant they were presently engaged in these activities; for others, it was part of their past as their children were now adults. Some wives had been active in the New Brunswick Farm Women's Network but were no longer as they felt their objective of making women's issues visible among the farm community had been achieved. Others continued to be active in the New Brunswick Farm Women's Network believing much more needed to be accomplished for women and their family farms.

When women are available for volunteer community work is at least partially reflective of their farm's commodity sectors. Events in the early summer are difficult for wives of dairy farmers; fall events are harder for potato farmers' wives to accommodate. The full extent to which their farm's commodity differentially affects their participation in volunteer work needs further investigation as many factors — family, farm and personal interests — also seem to be at play. In general, farm wives indicated volunteer community work had the most propensity to wax and wane suggesting they pick and choose their volunteer community work so it will not interfere with their other work spheres.

To summarise the evidence presented in this section, a husband's particular farming job will contribute to his wife's work by limiting both the time she has available and

restricting when she is available for cash generating, volunteer and leisure activities. How he is remunerated for his work will determine whether or not she will have a reliable and steady household budget. If she does she can plan her household expenditures, if she does not she is more likely to engage in her own cash generating activities to cover household costs in an effort to maintain or raise the family's standard of living. Likewise, differences in the daily and seasonal job requirements of dairy and potato farming produce marked differences in *what* farm wives do and *when* they will be called on to perform farm work, as well as when they will be free to do other work. In the end, dairy farmers' wives consistently emphasise daily work schedules while potato farmers' wives regard their work as changing with the seasons. A husband's farming job thus structures and contributes to his wife's work load in many ways but perhaps none are more conspicuous than her participation in farm work itself. The next section returns to the question of how wives contribute to their husbands' job by examining wives' involvement in 'farm' work on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada.

III. Let Me Count the Ways To Get the Farmer's Job Done: How Farm Wives Contribute to their Husband's Farm Work

In Chapter Four we examined how farm wives can become incorporated into their husbands' farming job through their participation in *peripheral activities*, by providing *back-up services* and by becoming *additional workers*. We also saw farm wives can be additional workers either by *proxy* — i.e. standing in for their husbands, by working *alongside* their husbands as helpers or by working *instead of* their husbands most often in his absence. According to Janet Finch (1983) these are the various ways wives effectively contribute to their husbands' job. As we have seen, all of these situations are present on the 'family' farms in my study. However, the most obvious way a farm wife contributes to her husband's farming job is by actively participating in his farm work. What farm work then does her 'family' farm require her to do? What farm production tasks is she expected to undertake?

There is a clear acknowledgement in the literature that there is more than one way for farmers to go about doing their job. For example, many researchers have documented the way individual family farms vary according to the size of the operation, the level of mechanisation, the particular production technology employed, and how dependent the farm is on wage labour versus family labour. However, these distinguishing features of farming are discussed at an abstract level since they are universally applied irrespective of what job the farmer and his family have undertaken. This literature effectively dismisses the reality that some farm commodities require

different kinds of technologies than others, that labour requirements differ from one commodity sector to the next, and even how the size of operation must be measured according to what is being produced — for example, acreage is the measure for a grain farm but not an egg operation — and that what is deemed large in one commodity sector may be small in another. I would argue such broad-brush abstractions about the production processes of farming unwittingly miss the **differences which exist between** commodity sectors and even the **differences which exist within** commodity sectors because they fail to observe the specific requirements of a particular commodity sector as well as the various options pursued within a commodity sector.

This final section of the chapter looks at the various ways dairy and potato farmers in New Brunswick, Canada have gone about doing their job and the impact their differing farming methods have on wives' involvement in farm production. The section concentrates on farm production because this is the most obvious way a wife contributes to her husband's farming job as well as the most concrete way a husband's farming job contributes to his wife's work. They are effectively two sides of the same coin since it is by marrying a farmer a wife finds herself participating in farm work. Moreover, the farm work she will be asked to do depends on what their farm is producing and how production has been organised. The first part of this section examines the farming practices and patterns in wives' farm work within each commodity sector by first examining production processes on dairy farms and then examining production processes on potato farms. This examination explicitly highlights differences within a commodity sector rather than differences between commodity sectors. The second part of this section returns to the broader discussion of the various ways farm wives contribute to farming given the fact they live and work on different kinds of farms.

A. Multiple Methods for Doing the Job

In the previous section we learned growing potatoes does not entail the same work rhythms and patterns of work as dairy farming. Obviously, the production processes of one commodity can not be transposed onto another commodity. To reiterate, dairy farmers have a different job than potato farmers. The procedures utilised on a dairy farm will not deliver potatoes. Likewise the work activities on a potato farm will not produce milk. If dairy and potato farmers have different jobs and tasks associated with their work, it is only logical that their wives will be engaged in different farm work as well. In other words, farm wives will be doing farm work which is relevant to their particular family farm. Wives of dairy farmers will be asked to milk cows while wives of potato farmers will be asked to plant and harvest potatoes. The farming tasks farm

wives do will reflect their commodity sector — plain and simple. At the same time, there is more than one way for dairy farmers and potato farmers to go about doing their job of milking cows or growing potatoes. On the one hand, there are two distinct jobs to be done. On the other hand, there are multiple methods for doing each particular job.

Researchers have acknowledged family farms vary according to size, levels of mechanisation and labour practices. But they have not tended to consider how these features differ between farms producing different commodities or how they differ between farms producing the same commodity. In effect, what is being produced is completely omitted in the final analysis. Instead researchers concentrate on farming methods as though they can be universally applied to all farm commodities. While such research efforts do demonstrate not all 'family' farms do their job in the same way and some actually change the way they go about 'doing their job' over time, they fail to recognise farmers producing different commodities are engaged in substantially different jobs. The subsequent conundrum is that we are effectively comparing apples and oranges. Apples and oranges may be grouped together, they may share certain features but they ultimately retain their own character. When all is said and done, they are two distinct fruits with their own unique flavours and defining characteristics. Similarly dairy and potato farms may both entail farming, they may share some common features but they retain their own integral work processes — one can not simply be transposed onto the other.

In the end, farming methods differ from one commodity sector to the next. However, they have also been observed to differ within a commodity sector. This dualistic character ultimately means wives' farm work can be expected to vary with the methods the farm employs to get the job done **within** commodity sectors, **between** commodity sectors and even during an individual farm wife's life[14]. In other words, the farm's commodity sector will determine the kind of farm tasks and activities a farm wife will be asked to undertake; while variations in how exactly 'the job gets done' on an individual 'family' farm will affect the possibilities she even has for participating in

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[14] Since individual family farms do not stand still, researchers are faced with the difficult task of trying to ascertain differences between commodity sectors while being confronted by different production processes within a commodity sector as well as recognising ongoing changes in production processes on individual family farms. This threefold level of activity and change does make it difficult to trace cause and effect relationships — especially when all possible permutations for family farms can be found at any one time. My purpose here is to simply draw attention to the range of work to be done and the range of ways family farms have gone about doing it.

farm production. This latter point is also made by Gasson and Errington (1993) when they write:

> ...the work wives do depends to a great extent on whether or not men are available to do it. Thus on the small farm with only the farmer and wife to do the work, she may have to do heavy lifting and other tasks which on the larger farm would be considered unsuitable for a woman. (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 153).

Rather than directly compare and contrast wives' farm work in each commodity sector or trace the ongoing changes on individual family farms, this section focuses on the 'methods' family farms in each commodity sector employed at the time of the interview to produce their farm's commodity.[15] It then considers the impact their particular production system has on wives' farm work. Specifically the section examines how the size, technology and labour practices of dairy and potato farms in my study affect wives' farm tasks and level of participation in farm production. In so doing the section examines the various ways farmers have set up their farms to produce the same commodity and the impact their various farming methods have on wives' farm work within each commodity sector. As we will see, not all dairy farmers' wives are engaged in the same farm tasks because their farms have been organised differently. Likewise, not all potato farmers' wives are involved in the same farm activities because they have organised production differently. Nevertheless, there are discernible trajectories within each commodity sector which the discussion will focus on.

i. When the Job to be done is Milking Cows

As we saw in the last section, milking cows is a very labour intensive farming job. Cows must be milked twice a day and for maximum yields they should be milked exactly twelve hours a part. [16] Essentially the job which needs to be done on a dairy farm is care for and milk the cows. An Agriculture Canada (1981) bulletin states:

> ...the dairyman must consider the well-being of the animals and the production and handling of milk. He must give his cattle feed and water as well as a satisfactory environment (Canada, Publication 1714, 1981: 3).

How exactly he will do this work is another matter entirely.

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[15] In effect, this section provides a snapshot of the different farming systems in place in each commodity sector in New Brunswick from the fall of 1995 to the fall of 1996.

[16] Apparently some dairy farms in Canada are starting to milk their herds three times a day (Cayo, 1996a: 6), however, this was not the case among any of my respondents.

Among my respondents, three general procedures emerged for 'getting the job' of milking done. Dairy farms could rely on an automated milk pail system[17], a pipeline system or a milk parlour for twice daily milking. Each of these milking systems involve different technologies — and barns — which in turn produce different labour processes. Interestingly, as Table 5.4 indicates these technologies seem to be employed within certain size parameters. Small dairy farms use the automated milk pail or pipe line system, medium size farms use a pipeline system while medium to large scale dairy farms use a milk parlour. Labour questions are more complicated as one must also consider the amount of farm diversity and the 'commodity mix' on particular 'family' farms. However, the general tendency is: the more cows being milked each day, the more 'additional labour' beyond the husband-wife team utilised to get the job done. This section briefly examines how farm wives' farming activities are affected by these varying features to be found on dairy farms in New Brunswick.

Only Betty continues to use the automated milk pail system as Denise is now retired from farming. Interestingly Dawn reported starting their dairy farm with this system and Posy and Priscilla both described using it when their farms were mixed operations with dairy cows. This milking system was basically introduced in New Brunswick in the late 1950s and began to grow in popularity in the 1960s. It allowed farms to expand their production as they could milk more cows much faster than by hand milking. At that time most dairy farms in the province were producing cream for the industrial milk sector rather than fluid milk. Therefore, as described in Chapter One, the automated milk pail would be strapped to the teats of the cow (for a description of the actual mechanics of milking a cow see Appendix F); when the pail was full, the milk would be carried to the separator. Once the milking was done, the cream would be separated from the skim milk. The cream would be stored in tin cream cans in a cooler and the skim milk would be used to feed the calves and for household consumption. Most of the wives in my study who used this system reported the pail was too heavy for them to carry when it was full. Therefore, they would assist by cleaning the teats and strapping the empty pail onto the cows but their husbands would carry the full pail of milk to the separator. The wives usually had the job of separating the milk and always the job of washing the separator. As Denise explained:

> I milked the cows. I did most anything. Lots of times my husband wasn't able to do the farm work so I had to do it all. I had to know how to milk. At first, we milked by hand. I would milk by hand into a bucket and then I would take the milk to the separator and

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[17] Which can also be called 'bucket milkers'.

> separate the cream from the milk. The milk would go to the bottom and the cream would rise to the top. We cooled the cream before adding it to the cream in the cream cans. I would do the washing up. We would bring the separator in from the barn to wash it. You had to take it all apart. There were approximately thirty discs, bowls, covers and rings which needed to be washed, and then scalded after washing. I was heating water on the wood stove at that time to clean it....Then we got a milk machine so we could keep more cows...the milk was still going into a pail but the milking went much quicker and the pails were a lot heavier. We carried the pails from the cow to the separator. And then all of those things had to be washed each day....

Dawn told a similar tale:

> I used to wash and clean the separator. We would have to bring it down from the barn to the kitchen sink. It needed to be taken apart and each piece had to washed and sterilised for the next milking. It was a lot of work and it had to be done each day. Now I have it sitting out on my lawn with flowers in it in the summer. I like it better out there.

Dawn's statement suggests this was not a particularly enjoyable task. But it is important to recognise the work she and Denise are describing are not simple household duties or an extension of their household job of dish washing. Washing and sterilising the cream separator was an integral part of the production process and therefore should not be misunderstood as a form of domestic labour or even back-up services (semi-skilled 'women's work' services). The farm could not produce its product — cream — without somebody doing this work. While we might argue wives were expected to do this work because it was considered women's work to do the 'washing up', to do so would undermine our understanding of how integral their labour was to the production process. This milking system is very labour intensive which is why it is only used on smaller dairy operations — and Betty's farm has additional labour present. Today the automated milk pail would be considered an obsolete milking system since present day dairy farms could not purchase such a system, except perhaps second hand at an auction. For large scale commercial operations it would not be considered a practical technology as it is too labour intensive and time consuming.

Interestingly, the farms using this system were diverse farm operations which suggests they were not solely reliant on cream production for their livelihoods. Dawn recalled:

> When we first came here I used to clean and wash eggs to sell; pick, grade and bag apples; I used to wash and clean the separator ...

Posy remembered similar responsibilities:

Table 5.4: Characteristics of Dairy Farms

	#Cows Milked	Milking System	Additional Labour	Farm Diversity	Other Ag Products Sold
Denise	12	Automated milk pail	—	Ag. products	beef, eggs, berries, woodlot
Betty	25	Automated milk pail	SON f-t + DAUGHTER p-t	Ag. products	potatoes, poultry
Deirdre	30	Pipeline (3 milkers)	1 p-t + FATHER-IN-LAW f-t	Ag. products	beef
Dixie	30	Pipeline (3 milkers)	1 p-t + summer hay crew	No	—
Daphne	35	Pipeline (3 milkers)	1 f-t	Ag. products	beef
Delia	37	Pipeline (5 milkers)	one person in summer	No	—
Dawn	40	Pipeline (6 milkers)	1 f-t + SON f-t	Ag. products	beef, apples
Dorothy	40	Pipeline (6 milkers)	—	No	—
Dotty	55	Pipeline (6 milkers)	SON f-t	No	—
Dolly	39	Milk parlour (6 milkers)	one person for hay in summer	No	—
Daisy	42	Milk parlour (8 milkers)	1 f-t / 1 p-t	Ag. products	turkeys
Dayle	60	Milk parlour (8 milkers)	SON f-t	Ag. products	beef
Donna	65	Milk parlour (8 milkers)	1 f-t in summer/ 1 p-t in winter	No	—
Barbara	65	Milk parlour (8 milkers)	2 f-t herdsmen + 4 f-t May-Oct. + 6 f-t + 6 p-t for harvest+ SON f-t	Ag. products	potatoes
Debbie	70	Milk parlour (12 milkers)	1 f-t + summer hay crew + 2 BROTHERS f-t	Ag. products	beef, hogs
Diane	80	Milk parlour (6 milkers)	1 f-t + 2 summer employees	No	—
Danielle	110	Milk parlour (12 milkers)	2 f-t	No	—
Debra	110	Milk parlour (24 milkers)	1 f-t + IN-LAWS & SON f-t	No	—

> We started as a mixed farm. Oh we had everything: cows, chickens, pigs, sheep, even a goat. Plus the potato crop and a big vegetable garden. I cleaned the separator each day. We got rid of the cream in order to increase our potato acreage. I wasn't sorry to see the dairy cows go. The separator was a bit heavy but we'd bring it to the house and I'd wash it. My husband sheared the sheep — that was another job I didn't like.

Mixed farms, therefore, have wives doing a greater variety of farm tasks than more specialised operations precisely because there is a greater range of tasks to do. Moreover, even if wives are participating in farm work, they may not like the jobs they are expected to do!

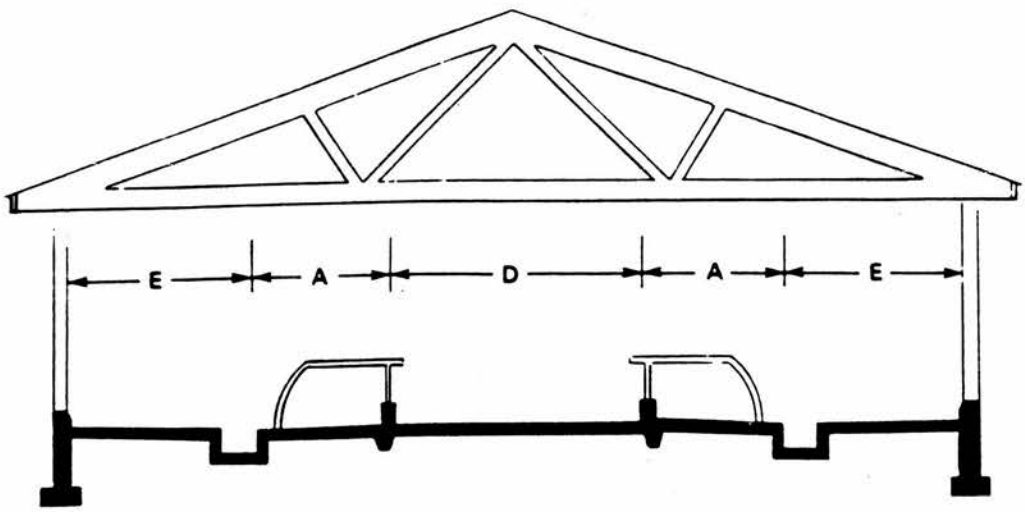
Parenthetically, while there is a greater propensity for small farms to have mixed operations, farm diversity is not restricted to this group as mixed farms are found in all size categories. What is noteworthy in Table 5.4 is that regardless of their size, mixed farm operations also tend to have more additional labour. The presence of more additional labour undoubtedly facilitates expansion into another commodity sector. For example, Deirdre told me her father-in-law is in charge of the beef while her husband is in charge of the dairy. Likewise Debbie indicated her family looked after the beef, one brother-in-law took care of the hogs and the other brother-in-law was responsible for the dairy. Similar divisions of labour are described by the other wives reporting more than one agricultural product for sale. However, as farms become larger they tend to rely on additional labour for the production of the farm's main commodity. The presence of additional labour can change the work wives do. For example, recall how in Chapter Four Danielle told us neither she nor her husband have done barn work, i.e. the daily care and milking of cows, since they hired two full-time herdsmen two years ago. On the other hand, Diane and Debra are extremely active in commodity production. Debra milks solo at least once a day and Diane is responsible for milking at least once a day while Debbie works as a farm employee milking cows every other weekend and on an on-call basis. Interestingly all of the dairy farmers' wives who reported regularly milking on their own lived on dairy farms with milk parlours.

The two most prevalent milking systems in the province today are milk parlours and the pipeline system. Each of these milking systems entails a certain constellation of features — i.e. barn styles, cleaning and feeding systems — which effectively delineates one system from the other in terms of overall design and labour practices. Moreover, there is a sense of progression in that dairy farms with milk parlours tend to be bigger than those using a pipeline system. That is to say, farms with a pipeline system would 'upgrade' to a milk parlour in order to expand. However, 'upgrading' also tends to entail changing the barn layout, feeding practices and cleaning systems. Once farms have a milk parlour, they are unlikely to convert back to a pipeline system.

But I did find some milk parlour operations retained features of the pipeline system when they built their new barns.

Specifically, a pipe line milking system is usually installed in a tie-stall barn. This type of barn has each cow tied in her own stall. There are usually two rows of milking cows so they can either be facing each other (face-in) or the cows can be standing butt to butt (face-out). The face-in stalls will have the feed alley in the middle of the barn and the manure gutter on the perimeter (see Figure 5) while a face-out arrangement will

Figure 5: Dairy Barn, Face-in, Two Row Arrangement



From: Canada, Publication 1714, 1981: 6

place the manure gutter in the middle of the barn and the feed alley around the perimeter. The face-out system may result in fewer breakdowns and smoother operation of the continuous-chain barn cleaner as there are likely to be fewer loops in the system; this approach also has the advantage of keeping barn walls cleaner. According to Agriculture Canada:

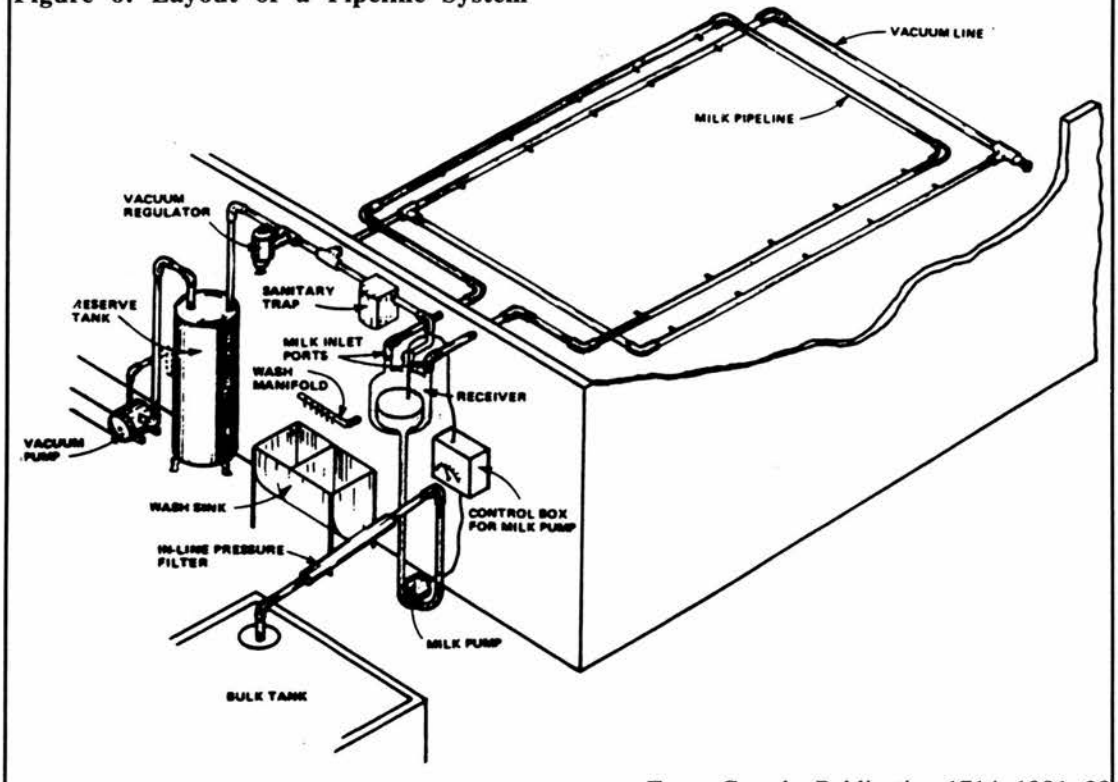
> Tie-stall housing is the most acceptable, economical and efficient housing system for herds of up to 50 or 60 milking cows...The tie-stall system should consist of two rows of milking cows for herds of up to 50 or 60 cows.... Since each water bowl, vacuum line stallcock, milk line inlet and stall divider can serve two cows, an even number of stalls in each row helps economize the equipment (Canada, Publication 1714, 1981: 4).

In the tie-stall system, each cow is fed, milked and cared for at their individual stall which makes it easy to identify each cow — often by name. In fact, some tie-stall barns I visited had each cow's name emblazoned on a wooden plaque hanging over the stall. This system makes it very easy to identify sick cows which have been given

penicillin as they can not be milked or they will contaminate the whole tank of milk. In this system as the cow is milked, the milk travels along the pipeline — which is located directly overhead of the tie-stalls — into the bulk holding tank (see Figure 6 for a layout of a pipeline system):

> In pipeline systems the milk is lifted directly from the milker claw into the milk-line. The claw is usually equipped with an air vent to permit air to flow into it and push the milk up the tube and into the pipeline (Canada, Publication 1714, 1981: 29).

Figure 6: Layout of a Pipeline System



From: Canada, Publication 1714, 1981: 29

Seven of the sixteen dairy farms (forty-four per cent) in my study had tie-stall barns and were using the pipeline milking system. Interestingly, the size of their dairy operations fall within these recommendations in that none reported milking more than 60 cows.

Just the same, some dairy operations are milking fewer than 60 cows using the milk parlour system — notably Dolly and Daisy. Both these women reported building new dairy barns in the past ten years so given the progression from hand milking to pail milkers to pipeline to milk parlours, it is not surprising they would build milk parlours and free-stall barns while making farm improvements. In the pipeline system cows are milked in their stall, in the milk parlour system cows are taken to the milk parlour to be milked. Milk parlours are usually accompanied by a free-stall barn, i.e. an open

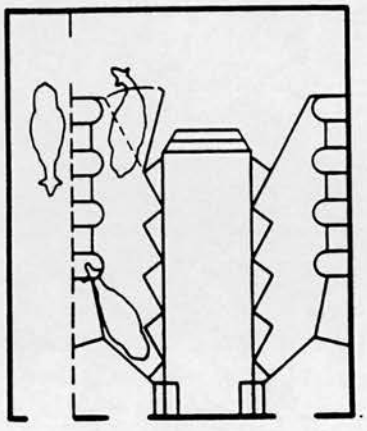
concept barn in which milking cows are 'free' to roam around. Such barns are not, however, completely free of stalls but the main herd is not tied and it does freely move in the open area. However, the herd does need to be divided according to the stage of lactation, i.e. there needs to be a place for cows about to give birth:

> ...divide a herd into two or more groups based on production and/or stage of lactation. These divisions are essential if [dairy farmers] are to realize efficiencies and economies in feeding and get best production from both individual [cows] and the herd. With larger herds of 120 or more, try to divide the herd into three groups of milking cows and one group of dry cows and spring heifers (Canada, Publication 1715/E, 1982: 5).

In this type of barn there is a central feeding area where cows are fed; but to monitor the amount individual cows are eating dairy farmers often use computer feeding systems — as was the case on Barbara's farm. When cows go to feeders, the computer reads their identification tag, identifies the amount of food they have eaten and calculates their current feeding, sends it to them and updates its records to include this feeding. Only five of the farms with free-stall barns were using computer feeding — Dolly, Dayle, Barbara, Diane and Debra — in part because it is very time consuming for the farmer as he must monitor each cow's milk production and feed allocation on an almost daily basis and revise the computer program accordingly, i.e. if milk production declines cows should be fed more. Interestingly, Dotty was the only dairy farm using a pipeline system which also reported computer feeding. Danielle's farm used to have computer feeding but they stopped using it two years ago because "it was a time consuming and frustrating program", since they stopped using it they "have saved money and [their] milk production has actually increased".

Milking in a milk parlour system basically means herding the cows to a waiting area outside the milk parlour. As the cows are milked, the barn is cleaned — either by pressing a button and having the automatic barn cleaner scrape down the barn floor or by using a front end loader to push the accumulated manure to the barn exit nearest the manure lagoon — and hay and silage are delivered to the central feeding areas (which are divided off so cows can not walk on their food) — again some barns have mechanised this procedure while other barns use front end loaders. Cows are herded into the milk parlour according to the number of milkers to be found there. There are several different kinds of parlour layouts, the most common layout among my respondents was a herring bone system (see Figure 7). Some farms had a double three herring bone system (six milkers) while some had a double four herring bone system (eight milkers) and others had a double six herring bone system (twelve milkers).

Figure 7: Cross-section of a Double 4 Herringbone Parlour



From: Canada, Publication 1715/E, 1982: 36

As the cows enter the milk parlour they stand in one of the parlour stalls, their udders are washed and cleaned and milk units attached to their udder — all of this work is done from the operator pit (see Figure 8). The person responsible for milking the cows stands in the milking pit so their upper body is more or less level with the cow's udder which eliminates bending and reaching:

> One of the greatest single advantages of a milk parlor is the sunken operator pit. The elimination of bending and stooping makes milking much easier. The floor is usually 750 to 900 mm below the cow platform but can be altered to suit the individual operator.... Rubber mats on the floor at each of the milker stations can greatly reduce leg fatigue (Canada, Publication 1715/E, 1982: 3).

Like the pipeline system, milk is piped to the bulk holding tank (one is shown in Figure 8), in this case it is pumped from the milk parlour rather than from the barn area where the cows are, and therefore, the amount of piping is reduced substantially. Obviously the more milkers a dairy farm has, the faster they can milk the herd. However, the size of the herd also tends to increase with the number of milkers, therefore, the amount of time spent in the barn milking cows may not differ dramatically between larger and smaller farms.

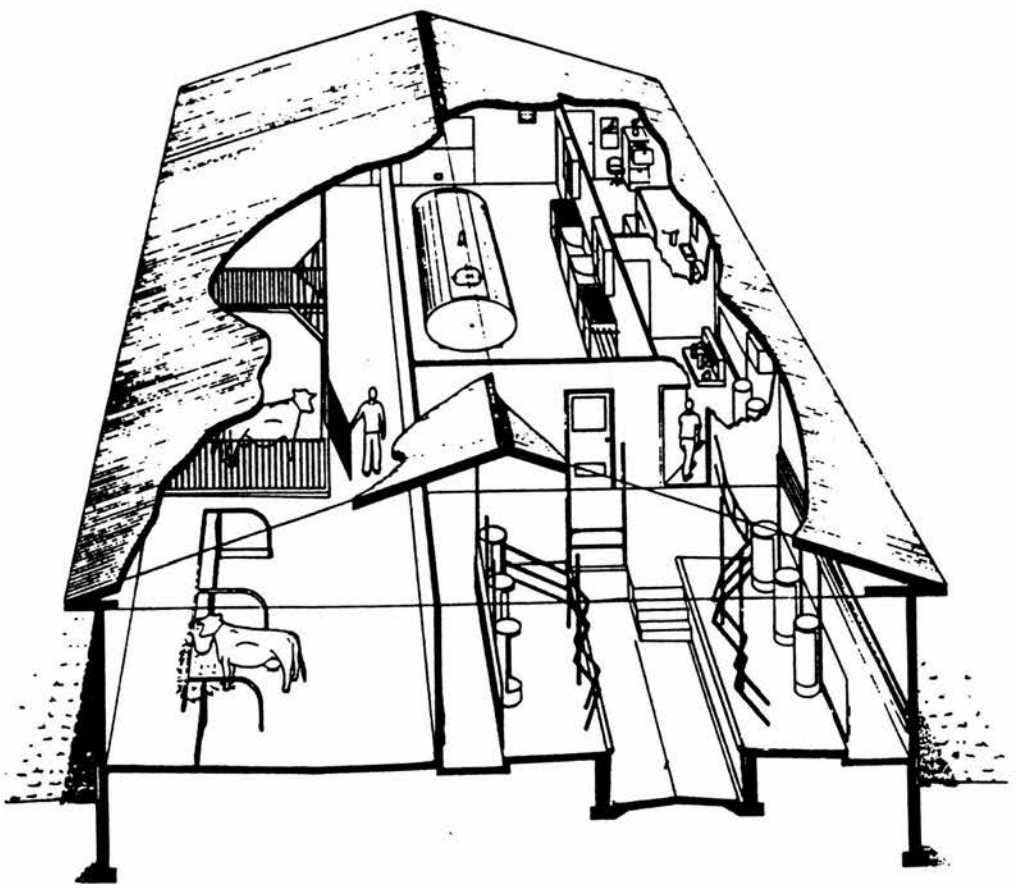
Debra's farm was the only one with a parlour layout other than a herring bone. On her farm they have a 12/12 parallel exit which allows them to milk twenty-four cows at a time which has greatly reduced milking time. Interestingly, her dairy farm also has a tie-stall barn rather than a free-stall barn so each cow must be untied, herded to the waiting area, milked and then retied in their stalls after milking. Even so she reported a

very fast milking, barn clean up and feeding time when compared to the other dairy farms:

> The other night I did the evening milking by myself and I had everything done in one hour and a half. All the changes we have made on our farm have been to increase efficiency.

She prefers a tie-stall barn because animals are much cleaner than in a free-stall barn, which she believes keeps animals healthier.

Figure 8: Milk Parlour, Bulk Holding Tank and an Adjacent Treatment Area



From: Canada, Publication 1715/E, 1982: 8

From the discussion so far, it is clear that there is not a crisp line between milking systems, types of barns, cleaning systems, feeding systems, etc. on dairy farms in the province — and I would hazard to say, elsewhere for that matter. But it is not within the scope of this thesis to report on each nuance or all the equipment and their technical specifications to be found on dairy farms. What is noteworthy, is that dairy farmers' wives reported doing different farm tasks in each of these milking systems. In other words, the technology employed on the farm to get the job of milking done and its constellation of features influences the farm activities wives are able to do.

As previously mentioned, with the exception of Denise, wives on farms with automated milk pails said the pails were too heavy to remove from the cow and carry to the separator when full. This technology, therefore, made it virtually impossible for wives on these farms to do the daily milking on their own. The gendered division of labour to be found on these farms is, in effect, a consequence of the technology employed — for the most part, wives did not report having the physical strength to do the milking on their own in this system. Of course, there are probably other women like Denise who did milk on their own with this system because they were as strong as or stronger than the average dairy farmer. The fact that women were doing such work supports the idea that variations in farm wives' work and the gendered division of labour is a consequence of technical requirements as much as social convention.

In the case of the pipeline system, both Daphne and Dorothy reported being too short to do the milking on their own unless it was absolutely necessary. Daphne told me:

> Before we start milking we have to sanitise the lines. It's done when the milk truck comes and then before and after each milking. You just push a button and it's done. I take the solution to clean off the teats. I clean them by hand using paper towels. I clean the cows. I'm not into putting the milkers on. I'm not tall enough. I can't reach the pipeline. Sometimes I've had to do it, but it's not safe. I'm reaching way over my head and standing on things. Me cleaning makes the milking go faster.

While Dorothy revealed:

> I do farm work if my husband is sick or if he can't do it for some reason. I don't milk. I am too short to milk. I can't reach the pipeline without standing on something. If I really had to I could do it, but usually I look after the calves and heifers. I spend a few hours every afternoon in the barn tending to them. Work wise he doesn't need me to be there but it saves him an hour or so in the barn if I feed while he's milking and I can keep him company while he milks.

Dixie described a similar work pattern between her and her husband when they were farming. One thing to be realised is that all of the milking is being done in the barn so husbands and wives can physically be working alongside each other in this system while doing distinct tasks. For example Daphne and her husband share the job of milking: she washes and disinfects the udders and her husband attaches the milkers to the udders and hooks them into the overhead pipes. Dixie fed and cared for animals while her husband milked, as does Dorothy. In so doing, they are assisting their husbands with their job. As Daphne said, "milking goes faster"; likewise Dorothy argued her assistance saves her husband time.

Dotty, on the other hand, is fully responsible for half of the barn working more as an additional employee than as an assistant. In some respects she is doing the work

instead of her husband. She is responsible for the one half of the barn work — milking, cleaning and feeding animals. She and her husband decided to evenly divide the work between them rather than rely on hired help:

> It is easier for my husband and I to do the work than to have hired help. The person we hired didn't work out because he didn't have an interest in the farm. It didn't belong to him. I went out to look after the calves then I gradually worked my way into full-time. I sort of just took over my father-in-law's place....

This is possible because unlike Daphne and Dorothy, Dotty is tall enough to reach the overhead pipelines. Dotty is, therefore, both physically able and willing to do the job whereas the other two are willing to milk but they can not physically meet the job's requirements. There have been some changes on Dotty's farm though since her son started working with them. He covers for Dotty if she is unable to be there to do the milking, he looks after the calves and he does a lot of the extra work, such as grinding feed, which her husband used to do. Her son's presence on the farm has allowed Dotty to co-ordinate her schedule in such a way as to care for her grandchildren when her daughters are working. She doesn't get paid for this child care work but it is important to her and it would be harder to accomplish without additional labour on the farm:

> I don't get paid for looking after my grandchildren but I would rather look after them than send them to day care. I know they're being looked after when they're with me. I work my schedule around my daughters' hours. I'll go to the barn early in order to be ready to look after the children. If something goes wrong and I don't get my barn work done I can get my son to do the milking.

Neither Deirdre nor Dawn reported currently being involved in barn work or milking. In both cases there is additional labour on the farm so the work can be done without their assistance. Meanwhile Delia only did milking and barn work when her husband was away from the farm — in part because she had very little interest in farming. Even so, she identifies herself as a casual worker and like many other wives who did not milk on a daily basis, Delia did so during the summer harvesting season:

> I do the milking whenever I'm required — when my husband's away. I'm on call all the time now. I'm a casual worker on the farm. This is his life. I love being on the farm but full partnership is not for me. I'm a full-time partner in the marriage but I'm not a business partner. It's not a profession for me. I don't think we could work that closely. I'd have to be more into it as a business than I am. The barn basically gets free labour when I work.

Wives can basically 'put up with' poor working conditions for short periods of time, that is, they will do work they do not like, in less than ideal circumstances, as long as they are not expected to do this work regularly. They can be relied on to do the milking, even when they are not tall enough to do it comfortably and they don't

particularly like doing the work, if it is absolutely necessary. For example, Daphne told me:

> We would be in trouble if I didn't know what to do. I always try to be aware of what's going on. We couldn't both be sick at the same time. One of us would have to keep going regardless. There's no sick leave, there's no compensation. The cows have to be milked.

This need means few dairy farmers' wives have no milking experience. It may not be part of their daily routine but they can do barn work and milking if the need arises.

Daily milking is much more a part of the daily work routine of the farm wives living on dairy farms with a milk parlour than those in the pipeline system. Six of the wives on farms using milk parlours participated in milking every day. Three wives took sole responsibility for milking on a daily basis — Daisy, Diane and Debra. Dayle, Donna and Dolly did the milking alone if their husbands were absent or busy elsewhere but they generally reported assisting every day. Meanwhile Debbie milks on the weekends and during the summer hay season as a farm employee on her intragenerational farm. Only Danielle and Barbara were not currently assisting with barn work or milking and both their farms have hired help beyond family members. In short, one-third of the women on the most mechanised dairy farms milk alone regularly; and more than one-third do so on an 'as needed' basis. This finding stands in sharp contrast to Gasson and Errington's claim that farm wives are involved in routine farm tasks which have not been mechanised:

> Wives tend to be allocated routine tasks which are not mechanized....Jobs involving high technology, like milking in a modern parlour, are regarded as men's work (though women frequently clean the milking equipment) (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 151-152).

Milking in a modern parlour does not seem to be the sole domain of men in New Brunswick. What appears to be a more important factor for determining whether or not wives will milk is: one, are they able to do the milking?; two, what other work needs to be done; and three, who is available to do the milking and other work?

Milking in a milk parlour is physically easier than the pipeline system, which requires a fair amount of overhead work. Also, unlike the pipeline system, barn work must be done in a separate location from the milking. Therefore, there is more likely to be a formal division of labour as tasks are occurring in different places, often at the same time. As a result, women generally reported doing the milking while their husbands did other barn work. For example, on Diane's farm she milks the cows in the milk parlour while her husband cleans the barn using a front end loader and then delivers the feed to the central feeding station, also using a front end loader. They have

divided the barn work in such a way that they are both finished working at about the same time. Donna, on the other hand, generally did barn work while her husband did milking:

> I used to do square bale feeding while my husband did the milking. Now I take over wherever necessary. I like to learn as much as I can so I can fit in anywhere they want me to.

Dayle outlined a more routinised working schedule:

> I feed all the calves. I program the computer feeders. I do all the paper work. I do herd health. I get all the vaccines and needles ready. I used to do the milking but since my son started working with us I feed the calves when they start milking.

While Daisy related a more formal division of labour between her and her husband :

> I do everything that has to do with the cows. I milk them in the morning and evening. I'm the one who goes out to the barn when they're calving. Whatever is happening with them is my responsibility. He is responsible for the turkeys.

Daisy is working in one physical location, the dairy barn, and her husband is working in another, the turkey barn. At times their work may coincide but generally they work in their own domains. Daisy's farm is an interesting case because she also told me, "part of the income from the dairy is going to feed the turkeys" which suggests her component of the farm business is more economically lucrative than her husband's — a situation I would not have expected to find. In earlier research (Machum, 1987), I found wives tended to be responsible for farm work not related to the main farming enterprise, i.e. commodities other than the main cash generating one[18]. On a dairy farm, wives might have an egg operation like Betty did. On a potato operation, wives might have a beef operation like Pamela did. In this case, I would have expected Daisy to be caring for the turkeys while her husband looked after the dairy as dairy was the farm's main commodity.

My research indicates the farm's main commodity and the methods used to produce it should be considered when studying what farm wives do. Otherwise, we are left with sweeping statements about the farm work wives do, like this one from Gasson and Errington, without any explanation as to why they do this work rather than something else:

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[18] Gasson and Errington (1993: 160) make a similar observation. They claim men will be involved in the main enterprise while women will be involved in a marginal, diversified enterprise on the family farm. Reading their data it is evident what this means — 'main' versus 'marginal' enterprises — varies from place to place.

> [Farm wives] work with animals rather than crops, in horticulture rather than arable production, in and around farm buildings rather than fields. Typical tasks for women include rearing calves and lambs, feeding cattle, sheep and hens, fetching the cows, rounding up straying stock (1993: 152).

All dairy farmers' wives did report doing some of these tasks, some of the time. But as we will see in the next section, these 'typical tasks for women' are not typical jobs to be found on a potato farm.

ii. When the Job to be done is Growing Potatoes

Growing potatoes involves crops, arable production, and fields — all of the work activities farm wives are not 'typically' engaged in, according to Gasson and Errington (1993). Yet my interviews with wives of potato farmers indicates they are not immune from farm production. They are actively participating in farm work just like the wives of dairy farmers. However, the tasks they are asked to do correspond to their farm's commodity production; and as we saw in the previous section of this chapter when they are asked to do farm work reflects the rhythms and patterns of work on potato farms. Potato farming is a cyclical business and wives' participation in farm work varies with the seasons. It typically involves field work — planting and harvesting — in the spring and fall when such work is also being done by their husbands. Even though the tasks potato farmers' wives do change throughout the year on their own farm, what they do is not uniform from one farm to the next.

Just as the size of operation, technologies used, labour requirements, labour availability and farm diversity affect the work of dairy farmers' wives, they also affect the farm work activities of potato farmers' wives. In this commodity sector there is also the added wrinkle of what market will the potato crop finally be sold in? This is because potato production is planned and implemented in accord with existing agricultural marketing arrangements. Depending upon whether or not a potato farm is producing table stock, processing potatoes, seed potatoes or a combination of these crops — they will have to meet different standards and government regulations. This requires a lot of planning since before the crop can be planted, potato farmers must decide its final destination and organise their work processes to meet market regulations. Consequently, all potato farms may be producing potatoes but the kinds of potatoes they produce and the steps they take to produce them will vary depending on the final market destination.

As we can see in Table 5.5, among my respondents, three were seed growers, one grew only for the table market, one grew only for the processing market and the remaining nine grew potatoes for two or more of these markets. Potato farmers will be

growing different varieties for each of these markets. Seed potatoes have the most specialised market as potatoes grown for seed tend not to consumed as table stock or processed potato products. Seed potatoes are, in effect, grown for other farmers. New Brunswick exports a large proportion of its seed potatoes but both Paige and Paula indicated they tended to sell their crop locally. These two farms are growing elite seed which is a government specification and seed grown under this classification must meet stringent production regulations. Table stock potatoes are the potatoes we buy in the supermarket. A number of varieties can be grown and sold on the table stock market but frequently potato farmers grow varieties which can also be sold in the processing market. The processing market tends to purchase only a few specific varieties depending upon whether or not the end product will be crisps or chips. As potato farms grow in size, they tend to grow for more than one market, thereby, diversifying their operation within the potato sector.

Basically, potato farms decide how many acres of potatoes they will plant for each market before spring planting. Farmers planting for the processing market usually negotiate a pre-planting contract with one of the processing companies. These contracts enable the farmer to obtain an operating loan from the bank and they provide the farmer with a guaranteed income upon delivery of the specified amount. Since it is unclear how the season will progress, few potato farms are like Patricia and contract their whole crop. More often they contract part of the crop. Contracted potatoes must be grown, stored and delivered according to the processors specifications. Processors know they will have the raw materials they need and potato farmers growing for the processing market will have a buyer. Farmers growing table stock potatoes usually sell to a broker. Two of the farms in my study, Priscilla and Pearl, are providing a value-added product by selling potatoes which have been washed — a higher priced product for consumers who don't want muddy fingers! Farmers planting for the seed market tend to have a higher return, especially if they are growing certified seed. Given they are sold on open markets, potato prices can fluctuate throughout the year. Early potatoes and late potatoes generally get higher prices.

Once the decision has been made as to where to market the potatoes, farmers know what varieties to plant. Potatoes are planted in the spring, maintained during the summer and harvested during the fall. Half of the potato farmers' wives in my study reported regularly doing field work — ploughing the land, harrowing, discing, planting, maintaining the crop and working during the harvest. Only seed potato farms continue to do hand planting. Most farms use a mechanical planter but certified seed

potatoes must be hand planted which means these farms require more labour during this time of the year. Paula, who grows elite seed, described spring planting:

> Before we plant I help my husband get the fields ready, then the seed has to be cut and we do that by hand too, then we're out planting. We have a crew of about four to five to plant. It is all hand planting. It takes us approximately a week to do the planting. I feel like an ostrich going along with my head down. I do my thing without looking around.

Table 5.5: Characteristics of Potato Farms

	Acres Planted	Harvesting System	Market	Additional Labour	Farm Diversity/ Ag. Products Sold	
Peggy	100-125	hand picking	table	spring planting 3-5 + 20-30 for fall harvest + BROTHER f-t	No	No
Paula	25-30	harvester since early 1990s	elite seed	4-5 for harvest	Ag. products	beef
Paige	35-50	harvester since 1990	elite seed	'planting' crew + harvest crew of 5	No	No
Patricia	250	harvester since late 1980s	processing	seasonal workers in spring and fall + SON f-t	Ag. products	grain
Betty	55	harvester	seed	SON f-t + DAUGHTER p-t	Ag. products	dairy & poultry
Phoebe	150	harvester	table & processing	1 f-t year round + 6 for harvest + FATHER f-t	Ag. products	beef
Priscilla	250	harvester	table & elite seed	harvest crew + 16 p-t employees for business + SON f-t	Ag. products + value-added business	grain
Posy	275	harvester	seed & processing	1 f-t + 6 for harvest crew + SON f-t	Ag. products	mixed farm
Perdita	275	harvester	processing & table	1 f-t year round + 1 f-t (May-Oct) + 6 for harvest	Ag. products	grain & peas
Penny	300	harvester	processing & seed	2 f-t year round + 3 for planting + 7 for harvest	Ag. products + machinery business	grain & peas
Pamela	300	harvester	table, processing & seed	harvest crew of 15 + 4 employees with business + SON f-t	Ag. products + trucking business	beef & peas
Phyllis	310	harvester	processing & table	1 f-t year round + harvest crew + 2 SONS f-t	Ag. products + trucking business	beef
Pearl	400	harvester	table, processing & seed	4 f-t year round + 21 employees with business	Ag. products + value-added business	beef
Barbara	410	harvester + 4 row windrow	seed & processing	2 f-t herdsmen + 4 f-t May-Oct.+ 6 f-t & 6p-t for harvest+ SON f-t	Ag. products	dairy

Paige told a similar story:

> As soon as racking is done and our potatoes are sold. It's time to cut seed and get ready for planting on our own farm. First, we totally disinfect all our buildings, the potato house, the barn etc. Second, we cut the seed by hand. Thirdly, we store our seed in barrels in the barn — We let the seed warm up before planting it. Then we start planting. I help plant and it seems to take forever. We go out there year after year and do this.

At the same time as seed potato farms are preparing to plant their own crop, they can be selling last year's crop to other farmers. This is the case for Paula and Paige who both sell their seed to local farmers. They are both growing certified seed which means it is grown — and sold — according to strict government guidelines. The certification process means their seed is disease free and high quality — but it is also labour intensive. Paige's farm grows more than one variety of seed so:

> The equipment we use must be washed and disinfected before and after you use it for each variety. You can't go from one field to another with a different variety of potato seed. You could cross-contaminate your crop and lose your certification. We must follow clear guidelines.

When seed is being sold similar guidelines must be met. Paula explained:

> I grade the potatoes in the spring when we're selling potatoes. It's a very hectic time. I rack and grade the potatoes all morning and all afternoon and I help load the trucks.I go wherever I'm needed. I see what I can do and I do it. We have to clean and disinfect the potato house between each farmer. We call farmers and line up a schedule for them to be here. It takes a week if everything is on schedule and I really like to see that week go by.

Paige elaborated on what this process means for her work:

> It takes us two weeks to rack and grade the potatoes if we're lucky, it's usually closer to three weeks. We must disinfect between each farmer. Everything is hosed down. You must change your clothes and gloves between each new farmer getting his seed. Trucks are sprayed and then we touch them as little as possible to avoid spreading disease. We dip our feet in disinfectant. It's crucial because we could lose our licence for five years if we didn't follow these guidelines. But at the end of the day, I have a huge pile of laundry to do — all these coveralls we've taken off between each truck load has to be washed and ready for the next day. There's lots more laundry during this time and I spend my evenings in the house doing the laundry and planning meals because we feed all our workers and my husband is out ploughing our fields so we can plant as soon as we're done selling.

Paige's comments about laundry are particularly important since this seemingly 'domestic' work is directly tied to farm production. Paula commented, "You could be ruined if you're not careful", as she described the whole cleaning and disinfecting of coveralls and gloves. This work is not household labour, it is an integral part of their farm's commodity production. Yet this farm work would be overlooked by most studies of farm women's work because it is physically occurring within the family household and it is work generally identified as domestic labour.

Only the wives of seed potato farmers described constantly cleaning and disinfecting the equipment at each stage of production. This cleaning and disinfecting extends to their clothing — especially gloves — which results in an extensive amount of work clothes being washed to industry standards as opposed to an individual's standard. Also seed potato farms must 'rogue' the fields throughout the summer weeding out poorly formed or diseased plants. This work can only be done by hand, it is very time consuming, and the whole family is generally called on to do this job which needs to be done every few days. Summer on a seed potato farm does not, therefore, have the same lull in production as can often be found on processing and table stock potato farms.

On all potato farms, the fall harvest is by far the most labour intensive period. In New Brunswick, the potato plants are chemically killed in September as they would not naturally die until late September/ early October which would mean a late harvest, the risk of frost and even snow as the crop was harvested. Being able to chemically kill the tops permits more planning around what fields to harvest first, and when to have pickers and the harvester crew lined up to start working. Once the plants have died, the fields are raked to take the tops off. At this stage, the potato crop can be hand picked — which was the only option until the introduction of machines in the 1960s — or harvested using a conventional or air vac harvester. In my case study, only Peggy's farm is hand picking the crop.[19] However, three potato farmers' wives reported only recently shifting from hand picking the crop to a harvester while the majority have been using a harvester for more than ten years.

Hand picking requires a large work force to get the harvesting job done. Twenty to thirty pickers have to be hired — though many continue to pick for the same farmers year after year — depending on the size of the operation. Every morning during the harvest, the pickers spread out along designated rows. Passers-by can see them bent over putting the potatoes in flat, round baskets, surrounded by potato barrels which dot the long rows of potatoes. As their basket fills up, pickers dump the potatoes into wooden barrels which have been dropped off along the rows. Once a barrel is full, they mark it with their tag as each picker is paid a piece rate for every barrel they fill. As pickers pick, flat bed trucks move on and off the field, workers jump up and down

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[19] As an aside, Peggy's farm did have a harvester in the 1970s but they chose to "park it in the field" and to return to hand picking as it is "a more environmentally sound option". For a detailed description of the varying impacts on the environment of hand picking and mechanical harvesters see Machum, 1992.

off the trucks loading full barrels on to take to the potato house where they are emptied. As the full barrels are emptied into the potato house, the tags are collected to be counted later and the empty barrels are returned to the field.

A few rows ahead of where the pickers are currently picking the potatoes, somebody is driving the potato digger along the rows raising the tubers to the surface. Potatoes can't be dug much in advance of when they will be picked as they can easily be sunburned causing them to turn green. Essentially then, there are several hubs of activity and multiple tasks being done simultaneously. If the potato digger breaks down, the crew is waiting to pick but there are no potatoes; if trucks break down full barrels sit in the fields while empty barrels are needed. One can begin to imagine the pressures of timing and co-ordinating activities, the need for a wife to fill in if somebody doesn't show up, the frenzy of not stopping for meals in order to finish harvesting fields before the weather changes — the stresses and strains potato farmers' wives are coping with during the harvest. The story is much the same on farms with a potato harvester.

The biggest difference between a farm which hand picks and one which uses a harvester is the size of the crew. The harvester only needs a crew of four to six people, however, there is still an ancillary crew of truck drivers, diggers and a crew in the potato house. In this system everybody gets paid by the hour. Potatoes are raked, dug and then often windrowed so that two rows of potatoes are combined to form one. On Barbara's farm they have a windrow which turns four rows of potatoes into one. This reduces the amount of times the harvester will have to move across the field. The harvester moves along the field either mechanically picking the potatoes up by digging under them to lift them up as is the case in a conventional harvester or by vacuuming them up as is the case in an air vac harvester. In both systems, the potatoes run along a conveyor belt in front of the harvester crew who picks off damaged potatoes and rocks because damaged potatoes can promote rot among the whole crop once the potatoes are in storage. This work can be quite dangerous as the potatoes are moving quickly, the crew has to be alert and they are working quickly. The potatoes move along the conveyor belt, up a chute, and then drop into a bulk body truck. Therefore, there is always a truck moving down the field beside the harvester, when a truck is filled another must be ready to move in and take its place. This generally requires three trucks: one moves with the harvester, one is on standby and one is being unloaded at the potato house. All of the wives in this group indicated they had worked on the potato harvester at one time or another during their married life — for most wives it

was a matter of filling in because somebody didn't show up for work. Perdita explained:

> I fill in if somebody is sick. But I try to keep track of the workers and to know who is coming so we will have a full crew here when we need it. I don't do fieldwork but I have worked on the harvester some years, it helps cut farm expenses if I work on the harvester.

Phyllis revealed:

> I am strictly in the office these days. I don't get involved in the outside work. But for five or six years I did work on the harvester every fall [full-time], after that I only worked as a spare if people didn't show up.

Without a proper sized crew everything is in limbo.

Many wives reported being responsible for getting the harvesting crew 'on board' to work each fall. Switching to a harvester in recent years has made Paula's job easier because their extended family is now big enough to do the job with only a few additional workers:

> I really appreciate the harvester especially since most of our crew is right here. I used to have to spend hours on the phone calling and getting pickers. I'd be the one making the phone calls.

Patricia also indicated it was much easier to get a work crew together now that they were using a harvester. However, she is still called on to fill in:

> I am always the one if somebody quits, if they're stuck I have to do whatever the person did. I prefer driving trucks but I do whatever they want.

This was a constant refrain among wives of potato farmers. Those women who were least likely to be involved in the harvest were women with full time employment elsewhere. But even then some women may be involved in the night shift or they may take their vacation to correspond with the harvest so they can be available to work if necessary.

All of the wives had additional paperwork to do during the fall harvest. Every evening Peggy, who works as a secretary during the day, comes home, counts and records the tags, also called tickets, collected off the barrels during the day:

> These days I don't do farm work [I have in the past] except record the hours of workers, calculate the payroll and send out T4 slips at the end of the year. My brother-in-law writes the cheques and does the farm accounts. In the fall, I count the tickets. It takes a couple of hours each night and it must be done regardless of what other things need to be done. It is an extra job, a burden to be done. And it has to be accurate, my numbers have to correspond with the number of barrels put in during the day. Then in the morning I go to the field with the tickets and give them back to the pickers with the totals.

> Sometimes they think they've picked more than they have. The pickers need to be reassured somebody responsible is taking care of them.

All of the women who used to have hand pickers described similar scenarios and this book-keeping job generally fell to women even if they had been working in the fields all day alongside their husbands. The harvester simplifies book-keeping somewhat since people are paid by the hour. However, wives must keep track of who worked, when and for how long to keep accurate records. This pressure led Paige to say:

> I do payroll. It's nightmare city doing the accounting.

With their additional business, Pearl reported spending five to six hours a day doing accounting work. The more diversified the farm enterprise, the more employees, the more paperwork and book keeping work which needs to be done. All of the potato farmers' wives identified book keeping as one of their major contributions to the farm enterprise — a job which seemed to be less time consuming or problematic on the dairy farms studied.

Once the crop is harvested, it is put in storage. The majority of the potato houses have computer run ventilation systems which monitor the amount of moisture and the temperature inside the potato house. Potatoes basically need to be kept from freezing but at low enough temperatures to keep them from sprouting. Paula's farm continues to use a wood stove and portable heaters to do this job so every day during the winter the potatoes need to be checked twice a day and more often if it is cold — a job she does. More often during the winter months, wives are asked to help rack and grade the crop when brokers or processors call for a shipment. The seven wives who reported always working in the fall harvest as an additional worker also did this work.

The wives on the five potato farms which have additional businesses besides the main enterprise of growing potatoes, all described large amounts of secretarial work when compared to other potato farmers' wives. Two of these farms have added a packing line to their operations which produce a value-added potato product. Priscilla works on this line during the winter months while Pearl spends most of her day in the farm office. Farms with additional farm products for sale can involve women in animal husbandry especially if they have a beef, dairy or poultry operation — which was the case for half the potato farms in my study. These wives are, therefore, doing multiple farming tasks as they contribute to their husband's farming job. Again, it must be remembered that animals will require more time and work in absolute terms than field crops which explains why women are found spending more time working with animals when their farm work hours are counted.

What is noteworthy is that wives contribute to their husbands' job of growing potatoes in different ways because the work to be done on seed, table and processing potato farms differs **and** the way they go about doing their work differs. Farms producing for more than one market can increase the overall work load for farmers and their families. All potato farms rely on additional labour during the peak harvest season but importantly the less mechanised the farm, the more labour required to get the job done. Therefore, using the prescence and quantity of hired labour to measure capitalist relations of production is insufficient. One must also study the technologies employed, the size of the operation and the level of other activities occurring on the farm to understand how all of these factors interplay and affect the farm tasks wives do. As farms change how they do the job, both farmers' and wives' work will change. A wife's farm work should, therefore, be understood as a consequence of what the farm sets out to do and how it does it.

B. Farm Wives' Varying Contributions to Farming

From the above discussion it should be clear dairy farmers' wives are engaged in different farm work activities than potato farmers' wives. They can not be expected to do the same tasks because their farms are not producing the same product. Dairy farmers' wives are more likely to be involved with the care of animals than field crops precisely because more time during the year is dedicated to animal care. Conversely, potato farmers' wives will be more involved with field crops than the care of animals because that's where most of the resources on their farm will be targeted. Overall dairy farmers' wives will spend more time in farm production than potato farmers' wives because the job of milking cows requires more absolute time in a given year than growing potatoes. In both commodity sectors, wives who participate in farm work are likely to do so as 'additional' workers on the 'family' farm. But the farm work they do will be established by the farm's commodity production. Just as specialised dairy farmers will not be growing acres of potatoes and specialised potato farmers will not be milking cows, neither will their wives. Yet the import of this most basic observation has been lost on researchers studying farm wives' work.

Farm wives are treated as though they have an homogeneous job description. Variations in their work are attributed to variations in how the job gets done rather than the actual job which needs to be done. That is to say, rather than understanding variations in women's farm work to be a consequence of the varying tasks to be done in each commodity sector, researchers have perceived them to be simply a consequence of differences in size, technology and labour practices on family farms. This latter approach is pursued because researchers have believed all farms are

comparable on these grounds irrespective of what they are producing. Such research effectively downplays differences in the job the farmer and his family have undertaken to do and the broad structural conditions under which their job will be done in favour of developing common measurements of farm features which can be applied to all farms regardless of what they are producing.[20] My research indicates technology, size and the utilisation of labour vary across commodity sectors. Therefore, the list of farming tasks wives are observed performing must be understood within the context of their farm's commodity production.

A farm's size may determine the scale of production but it does not predetermine the use of a particular technology on farms producing the same commodity. Nor does farm size and the choice of technology determine whether or not family or waged labour will be utilised to 'get the job done'. As we saw in Chapter Four, families may join together to form inter- and intra- generational farms rather than hire additional non-family employees. Enjoining families permits 'family' farms to appreciate economies of scale without employing wage labour and to spread the cost of production over more than one family. Interestingly, among my respondents, extended family farms are more prevalent on potato farms than dairy farms. As we see in Table 5.6 potato farms also have more incidence of hiring non-family labour than dairy farms:

Table 5.6: Hired Labour on Family Farms (here I am counting the instances where this occurs, therefore numbers exceed the total number of interviews)

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Farms with non-family Full-time Employees	8	6	13
Full-time Employees on a part-time basis	2	0	2
Part-time Employees on a full-time basis	0	4	5
Employees on a seasonal basis	14	7	21

This is hardly surprising since the potato harvest requires a large amount of labour in a short period of time. Moreover, the labour requirements of a potato farm which hand

[20] This is perhaps a consequence of searching for a grand theory which can be applied to all farms, in all places.

picks the crop is much higher than a potato farm which uses a mechanical harvester for the same job. In fact, the amount of labour used on a potato farm is not the best indicator of how 'large' the operation is. On a potato farm, five to forty people may be employed during the fall harvest depending upon the technology used. By contrast, one full-time herdsman on a dairy farm can relieve the pressures of daily milking off the dairy farmer and his family, even on a fairly large dairy farm. For example, while Danielle used to be responsible for summer milking, neither she nor her husband do the milking since they hired two full-time herdsmen:

> Before we expanded and hired herdsmen, I would milk in the summer during the haying season. My husband no longer needs to milk either. He does other work and we leave the milking to the herdsmen. That's what we hired them for.

In effect, if there is one hired helper on a dairy farm women will do less farm work than if there is no hired helper — but so will their husbands. This is a point which tends to be overlooked by those studying farm wives' work.

Simply counting the incidence of hired labour — without regard for a commodity sector's overall labour requirements — misses the overall impact labour issues can have on farm wives' work. For example, Table 5.6 presents the incidence of hired labour on family farms in my study. There does not appear to be a substantial difference in the incidence of hired labour from one commodity sector to the next. However simply counting the incidence of hired labour overlooks the fact that four of the eight potato farms with full-time, non-family employees also have second businesses which none of the six dairy farms have. The other two potato farms with full-time, non-family employees are producing animal products in addition to their potato crop for commercial sale while four of the dairy farms in this category also have additional crops for commercial sale. The two potato farms with full-time employees on a part-time basis have value-added farm businesses. The hired labour on potato farms is, thus, overwhelmingly being utilised for other purposes besides the farm's main commodity production. Yet all of the potato farms, irrespective of their size or levels of technology, hire non-family labour on a seasonal basis. No potato farm reported having enough family labour to harvest the crop completely on their own.

Conversely half of the ten dairy farms in my study which rely on non-family labour on a full-time or part-time basis utilise this labour in the farm's maind commodity production because they do not have second businesses or other agricultural products for sale. Moreover, less than half the dairy farms relied on seasonal employees, whereas all the potato farms do. When we discussed the work patterns and rhythms of particular commodities, we saw it was during the summer haying season that wives of

dairy farmers were called on to milk cows even if they didn't normally do so — this is happening in spite of the presence of additional non-family labour.

In the end, it is very hard to ascertain which group of farm wives do more farm work or the overall impact of hired labour on women's farm labour since all the farm wives are contributing to their husbands' farming job by doing farm work at some point throughout the year. My conclusion is that their contributions vary because what is required varies. When they do the work also varies because the seasonal and daily work rhythms vary. Gasson and Errington (1993: 149-150) agree:

> [A farm wife]...fills in when regular workers are absent, provides an extra pair of hands at busy times or in emergencies.

Being available to do such work in order to keep farm production running smoothly is an important contribution to the family farm enterprise. Paying somebody to 'wait' for emergencies would not be very economical. Wives on potato farms do a plethora of tasks and co-ordinate multiple levels of activity during the fall harvest — at the time when additional labour is in abundance. What's more, wives can be entrusted with difficult jobs and relied on because they have a vested interest in the farm which paid employees do not. The importance of being able to count on family labour at busy times or in emergencies should not be underestimated.

Interestingly, farm wives reported doing less farm work or different farm work once their sons and daughters started participating in farm production on a regular basis or as father-in-laws and mother-in-laws retired from farming. As we saw in Chapter Four (Table 4.8), there are more 'nuclear' family operations among the dairy farms in my study than among the potato farms in my study. Ten of the sixteen dairy farms were nuclear family operations at the time of the interview while only five of the fourteen potato farms were nuclear family operations. Nuclear family operations may increase a wife's farm work load while extended family operations may require farm wives to increase their stress management work for the smooth functioning of the farm enterprise. The work they are called on to do, thus, reflects their 'family' farms composition. The presence of more complex family relations can and no doubt does influence what farm wives do, their expectations and roles in the farm enterprise. Gasson and Errington (1993: 172) agree and argue:

> Husband's position at marriage can also influence the wife's role. Women who marry established farmers, accustomed to running the farm and making decisions without a wife's help, tend to be cast in the role of farm housewives. Especially where the husband is farming in partnership with his parents or brothers, the new wife has to tread warily and has little influence in the business, at least initially. On small farms, sons may not be in a position to start farming until the father retires or both parents die. By this time

> the son could be married, so the couple embark on farming together and the wife is as much involved in the venture as the husband. Wives who play the role of independent producer or active partner, on the other hand, may have decided on a farming career before marriage.

All of these situations, Gasson and Errington describe, were present on both dairy and potato farms in my study. However, I would argue the socio-economic conditions of the family farm's commodity sector must also be taken into account when trying to explain variations in farm wives' work. These factors may be relevant when looking at variations within a commodity sector but they can not explain differences in wives' work between commodity sectors. My findings suggest farm wives have very different work patterns and roles in each commodity sector, not because of the family composition at the time of marriage but, because the commodity sectors had different work patterns, tasks and levels of remuneration attached to them. In other words, different levels of activity in farm work are just as easily attributable to variations in farm production.

The work farm wives do and variations in their work activities are, I would argue, a consequence of **both** what the farm sets out to do **and** how their farm is organised to do it. For example, the amount of time it takes to milk twenty-five cows using an obsolete milking machine can be greater than the amount of time it takes to milk one hundred and ten cows in a modern milk parlour. Both wives may be milking cows but the amount of time they spend in farm production varies — not because one wife married an established farmer and the other didn't but because the technology they use varies. Hired labour shifts the farm work of both husbands and wives. Therefore, the amount of time wives spend doing farm work is not necessarily a good indicator of their level of commitment to the farm enterprise. Some farms require more time and labour than others because of the way they have been organised to get the job done. A wife's commitment to farming and the composition of the family farm at the time of marriage interplay with the job to be done and the labour, technology and size of operation.

Ultimately what farm wives do can vary according to the labour practices of the farm. But what they do can also vary according to what needs to be done. For example, some farm operations may require more of what is generally misclassified as domestic or 'household' types of labour to get the job done than others. Dismissing this farm work as domestic or ignoring this farm work fails to acknowledge an important way wives contribute to their husbands' farming job. Such farm work may be occurring within the family household but it is clearly not household labour.

Paige's laundry work is an integral part of their seed potato operation. It is work done for the farm operation not the family household. Cooking for work crews whether they be haying or picking potatoes is another example of how wives contribute to their husbands' farming job. In fact, half the women I interviewed indicated they had fed workers at one time or another while five of the thirty women had had farm labour live in their house as borders. This work is done in addition to the other tasks women take on and it is done to facilitate farm production. As Denise said:

> We fed workers their supper if we wanted them to stay and work into the evening. If they went home, they weren't likely to come back.

Paula revealed:

> Every afternoon we would feed pickers a snack and coffee. We would give them cookies, something with lots of sugar to energise them. It would help keep them going. I would start baking weeks before we started harvesting to have enough.

In these instances providing meals and snacks boosts workers' morale and keeps them working harder or for longer hours. Meals also appear to be viewed as part of the overall wage packet [21]. For example, Danielle argued:

> I used to provide meals for the first hired help when we came here. But we don't feel we need to provide meals. We pay competitive wages so I haven't had to do that anymore.

Dawn felt feeding hired help was her "contribution which the farm absorbed". Work done within the household can, thus, be an integral part of farm production. When wives will do this work will vary according to their farm's commodity requirements — for instance, dairy farmers' wives will cook for haying crews in the summer while potato farmers' wives will cook for harvesting crews in the fall — and whether or not they do this work will depend on how their farm is set up, the wages they pay workers and what their farm requires.

In conclusion, the farm work wives do is at least partially and significantly structured by their farm's commodity production. Their contributions to their husbands' farming job vary according to the demands of their farm operation and when the work needs to be done. In the end, dairy and potato farming have contrasting work requirements which produce marked differences in the farm work wives do as well as the work rhythms and patterns of their lives.

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[21] Cooper (1989) also makes this point.

IV. Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the several ways in which a husband's farming job contributes to his wife's work and how a farm wife contributes to her husband's farming job. The chapter argued a fundamental flaw in the existing literature has been the belief all farmers are engaged in the same 'generic' job of farming. This premise obscures the very real differences between farmers producing different commodities.

In New Brunswick, Canada dairy and potato farming are two highly contrasting industries in terms of their marketing arrangements and overall work rhythms. Dairy farms sell their fluid milk and cream in a closed, secure market while potato farms sell their seed, processing and table potatoes on an open, uncertain market. For maximum production dairy farming requires cows to be milked on a rigid schedule twice a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year — the only exception is when cows are 'dried up' for four to six weeks preceding giving birth or if they have been given medication. Dairy farms also require an intense summer work schedule to put in hay, silage and grain for winter feeding. Cows are bred all year long in order to keep the milk supply consistent to match output to milk quotas — these realities result in a very constant work schedule except for peak summer months. Potato farms have a more varied work schedule which reflects the seasonal nature of this farming job. Spring and fall are the peak work periods with a pronounced lull in the summer except on the more labour intensive seed potato farms which require 'roguing' to be done during the summer.

As the chapter has demonstrated, these differences in how dairy and potato farmers get paid and the varying daily, seasonal and yearly work rhythms attached to their work create contrasting situations for farm wives which in turn result in different work patterns and activities for farm wives in each of these sectors. Wives of dairy farmers spend less time in cash generating activities than wives of potato farmers for two reasons: one, they have a more stable and reliable farm income; and two, they have less time to devote to such work if they are actively participating in farm work. The daily demands of milking ties the whole family into the farm's work routine more so than the seasonal work of potato farming. On the other hand, potato farmers experience many peaks and valleys in both their work schedules and incomes which requires their wives to be flexible workers, ready to respond when and if called upon. From this case study it is possible to conclude marketing arrangements and the work rhythms and activities associated with farming a particular commodity do differentially affect farm wives' lives and work. Clearly more research needs to be done in this area to more fully appreciate how commodity affects farm wives' work. This chapter provides a template for those interested in studying how other commodity sectors —

i.e. a husband's farming job — and the socio-economic conditions attached to their production structures farm wives' lives and work.

CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPACT OF A CHANGING FARM COMMUNITY ON FARM WIVES' WORK

The farm wives interviewed for this research project are living and working in dramatically different communities and social times than their parents and grandparents lived in. Fifty years ago many parts of rural New Brunswick were still without paved roads and electricity[1]. News from relatives and neighbouring villages came by post and with travellers (MacInnis and McLaren, 1992). Today televisions, telephones, fax machines and personal computers have transformed the way we get information and communicate with the world. The internet can now connect New Brunswickers — whether they live in rural or urban areas — to any corner of the globe in a matter of minutes. Real roads vie with the 'information highway'[2] in a way people couldn't have imagined one or two generations ago.

Other societal changes have also transformed farm wives' lives and communities from what they were two, three and four decades ago. Before the 1960s brought radical changes in women's status, it was common for women to stop working in paid employment once they married and started having children. Raising a family took precedence over a career, so much so that marriage effectively ended a woman's career opportunities within the New Brunswick civil service until legislative changes in 1967 enabled women to continue to work for the province after they married (Tulloch, 1985: 108). Today women often return to their paying jobs shortly after childbirth.

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[1] Until the 1971 census, Statistics Canada reported the number of farms with electricity. A large percentage of farms — among them some of the largest farms — in the province were without electric power until it became universally available in the 1960s through the 1950's creation and ongoing work of a provincially owned and administered electric power commission (NB Power).

[2] The New Brunswick government has actively promoted the adoption of high-tech communication technology for businesses and individuals. They have supported the creation of several call centres as a solution to unemployment rates in the province. McFarland (1996) and Menzies (1996) both outline the negative working conditions of call centres and the precarious nature of such job creation. The government has also implemented grant programs to encourage individual households to purchase computers and become 'hooked up' to the internet — thus promoting the 'information' highway as a household phenomena.

Day care and modern 'conveniences' have enabled women to combine both family and careers rather than choose between one or the other as our mothers and grandmothers were often forced to do. Moreover, women are now found working in basically all professions — even those which have traditionally been considered male professions. While women have always worked to earn money (Bradbury, 1992; Hollingsworth and Tyyska, 1988), both the number of women working in the paid labour force and the character of their work has changed substantially in recent decades (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1990; Czerney *et. al.*, 1994; Hale, 1995; Koski, 1982; Maroney and Luxton, 1997). As women, farm wives are part of this historical process. They are both experiencing and witnessing the effects of women's changing status within Canadian society.

In addition to their changing status as women, farm wives face a changing agricultural sector and changing family farms. Agricultural restructuring has resulted in fewer farms producing the bulk of Canada's foodstuffs (Bollman and Smith, 1988). Fewer but bigger farms means the farm population has become more geographically dispersed as it has shrunk. Farm families have nonfarming neighbours which changes the mix of concerns and issues confronting rural communities (Cayo, 1996a-c; Redclift and Whatmore, 1990; Whatmore *et. al.*, 1991). As rural communities and the infrastructures within them change, the opportunities and constraints farm wives encounter change as well. Likewise, changes on their individual family farms can create real and dramatic variations in farm wives' work patterns and activities.

Sorting out the impact of such social, economic and political changes on farm wives' lives is difficult given the variety of responses one finds to broad social change. For instance, there are always some who approve and some who disapprove of the changes occurring around them. Some people promote change while others resist it.[3] Since individual, family, farm and community activities are all occurring and changing simultaneously the lines between various activities and events are often not as neat and distinct as academics portray them. In addition, the opportunities and constraints farm wives and their families face can change from one time period to the

[3] As we will see, specific situational responses mean 'real world' informants may not easily fit into one farming category or another, particularly if their involvement in farming stretches over several decades.

next depending upon both their own earlier actions and broader societal changes[4]. It is the *ongoing* nature of change and the vast array of responses to change which produces the "very complex and messy reality"[5] researchers attempt to make sense of and explain.

Quite simply, different opinions, pockets of activity, trajectories and patterns emerge in society precisely because people respond differently to the same or similar situations. Farm wives and their families are no different. Diversity in farm wives' work is simply a reflection of the range of responses farm wives have had to the changing opportunities and constraints they face. For example, some wives have opted for 'off farm' cash generating work while others have opted to increase their farm work. Some farm wives have opted to intensify household production while others have opted to buy ready made goods. It is important to realise what farm wives do is at least partially mediated by the social time and place they are located in. For instance, off farm employment is an option for farm wives in the 1990s in a way it wasn't before the Second World War.

Changes in the social, economic, political and cultural aspects of the farm community often can and do affect farm wives' lives and work opportunities. A fact most researchers have recognised since they have sought to make sense of farm wives' varied roles and work experiences by examining ongoing social, economic and political changes. Chapter Three reviewed how authors have argued differences in farm wives' work are a result of archaic patriarchal attitudes, variations in socio-personal characteristics and ongoing changes in the agricultural industry. Even though these explanations seem to be very disparate in scope all of them are reflecting on the impact of a changing farm community on farm wives' work. That is to say, they are acknowledging farm wives' lives and work are affected by transformations in society's attitudes towards women, in individual lived lives and in family farming.

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[4] For instance, a farm wife without a nursing degree can not work as a nurse. However, a farm wife with a nursing degree can not work as a nurse if there are no hospitals. In the first instance it is the woman's earlier decision of what career training to pursue that limits her current career opportunities. In the second instance, it is broader societal changes which constrain her work options.

[5] I am indebted to Murray Knutilla for using this phrase during a recent AASA conference (Halifax, October 1998) as it epitomises the difficulties of working with real issues in real communities with real people. Exceptions to the story seem to crop up everywhere. Yet there are certain trajectories, paths or directions of change within these communities. The challenge is to see the forest for the trees — a job which is not always easy to do when you are trying to map people's lives onto the broader social, economic and political landscape.

This chapter considers how the recent historical past[6] has affected family farms and farm wives' work[7] in New Brunswick as it is within this context of a changing farm community that the farm wives interviewed for this research project live and work. Specifically, the chapter considers the impact agricultural restructuring and the changing status of women have had on farm wives' work. From the outset it should be noted these two broad social dimensions affect all family farms irrespective of the commodity they are producing because they pertain to the political economy of the entire agricultural sector rather than to a specific commodity group and to much broader social issues. As we will see, farm wives and their families have not responded uniformly to the broader economic and social changes occurring in the farm community.[8] The chapter concludes by considering the situations farm wives on dairy and potato farms are currently confronting as they face the future.

I. AGRICULTURAL RESTRUCTURING

Few would deny extensive changes have taken place in New Brunswick's farm communities, agricultural sector and even on the individual family farms growing potatoes and milking cows. As Chapter Two indicated, evidence of the structural transformation of agriculture in New Brunswick is found in fewer but bigger farms, more technology and more capital investment in the agricultural sector (Byers, 1974; Cayo, 1996a-c; Murphy, 1986). These structural changes have been wide reaching, producing very different rural and farm communities than the ones which existed before the post World War Two expansion years. For example, the area of rural New

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[6] While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a complete history of family farming, the dairy and potato industries in New Brunswick or the changing status of women it would be an oversight to ignore farm wives are working on family farms which are themselves located in a changing farm community. For a history of New Brunswick agriculture see DeMerchant (1983) or for a broader discussion of agricultural change in the province see Winson (1985); for a history of the changing status of women in the province see Tulloch (1985).

[7] At any one time, women are engaged in every conceivable task so it would be an insurmountable undertaking to account for every job they do or every change they, their families, farms and community experience. The purpose of this chapter is simply to highlight the historical processes and circumstances within which farm wives are working.

[8] In effect diverse responses are apparent within a commodity sector while at the same time similar responses can be found across commodity sectors. This makes farm wives' realities extremely complex and messy; and might I add a challenge to present? I think it is also a key factor why 'commodity' is simply listed among the variables affecting farm wives' work since it is more difficult to see clear cause and effect relationships when looking at the broader social world. Some farm wives seem to pursue similar courses of action even though their farms are producing very different commodities while some farm wives engage in extremely different activities even though their farms are producing the same commodity.

Brunswick where I grew up and now own a house was filled with small mixed farms like Betty's when I was young. And my family, like most of our neighbours, combined farming with work in the woods — cutting saw logs or pulp wood — or city jobs. Not today.

Today, the barns and outbuildings are dilapidated or gone. The cream cans that used to sit at the end of farm lanes waiting for the rattling pick up truck to take the full cans to the Creamery and leave empty ones to be picked up and filled by the farmers are hand painted decorations sitting on door steps or in craft stores waiting for nostalgic consumers to take them home. The public buses which used to pass through these communities three times a day gave up these roads two decades ago in favour of a new highway system that cuts through provincial forests to join major urban centres. Individual family cars have filled the void while new houses have been built on what used to be farm land. Two hands are all that's needed to count the remaining farms along this thirty mile stretch of old provincial highway the New Brunswick tourism department has recently coined the 'Scenic River Route'.

Similar 'scenic routes' abound in rural New Brunswick. Country roads are no longer overflowing with farm houses, barns and outbuildings. Gone are the days when farm families exchanged produce and livestock and supplied their local store with eggs in exchange for staples they could not produce for themselves. For that matter, most of the local 'corner' stores, like the three that used to be within a mile of the house I grew up in, are gone. They have been replaced by supermarket chains and 'super' stores (Cznery *et. al.*, 1994; Kneen, 1995; Winson, 1988) located in larger urban centres. Rural families and farm wives often have to travel twenty to fifty miles to do their grocery shopping — an event which is now a regular household activity for farm wives in a way it wouldn't have been before New Brunswick's boom and expansion years. Before New Brunswick's economic expansion, most family farms were self sufficient operations growing, harvesting and preserving the family's food requirements (Machum, 1992). It was the family's excess food production which would be bartered with the local store and sold for cash earnings[9]. While commercial agriculture did exist, subsistence farming continued to predominate in New Brunswick until the mid-1950s (Bollman and Smith, 1988; Trant, 1986).

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[9] Carter describes a similar scenario in Northeast Scotland where farmers sold part of their crop for cash in order to pay taxes. In Carter's case the time period is much earlier — 1840-1914 — when compared to New Brunswick where this was still occurring in the 1950s.

As we saw in Chapter Two, it was during the late 1950s that most of New Brunswick's farm population left their farms, halving the number of census farms in the province. In 1991, two generations and forty-five years later, less than ten per cent of the farms present in 1956 continue to dot New Brunswick's rural landscape (see Table 2.2). Despite being substantially fewer in number, dairy and potato farms continue to produce volumes comparable to the days when their farm numbers were double and triple what they are today[10]. Even though the total volume of potatoes and milk produced in the province have not changed dramatically over the years (Statistics Canada, Catalogue #96-920, March 1984), the family farms they are produced on certainly have.

This section of the chapter examines the impact of agricultural restructuring on family farming in order to provide an historical overview of the changing economic and political context within which farm wives are working. The section begins by discussing how government agricultural policy has strived to shift family farms away from farming as 'a way of life' towards farming as 'a profit-oriented business' endeavour. Using my case study data, this section of the chapter examines the evidence that these two contrasting approaches to family farming persist in New Brunswick's farm communities and their implication for farm wives' work on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada.

A. Government Agricultural Policy: Promoting Change

It is important to realise the state was not an idle bystander when New Brunswick's farm population and census farms disappeared. The policies and practices of both the federal and provincial departments of agriculture actively encouraged and promoted agricultural restructuring. In 1967 when the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture was renamed the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, they stated their mandate was "to encourage the establishment of economic farm units and efficient food production" while increasing "income and employment opportunities for rural people" (New Brunswick, 1967: 10). These goals were to be achieved by "enlarging and consolidating farm units" while at the same time increasing the number of employment opportunities in rural communities (New Brunswick, 1967: 35).

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[10] When reviewing New Brunswick's entire agricultural sector, researchers and government documents indicate agricultural production in the province has declined over the decades (New Brunswick, 1977). However, dairy and potato farming are the two strongest agricultural sectors in the province so they have witnessed less of a decline. Even though potato and dairy production volumes fluctuate from year to year, they have remained relatively stable throughout the decades.

'Enlarging and consolidating farm units' can only be accomplished by either increasing the land base or having some families leave farming while their neighbours consolidate their farm operations into their own units, making them 'bigger more efficient' business enterprises.

This second approach seems to have been the preferred option since the average production capacity of potato and dairy farms in New Brunswick has risen steadily while the number of farms producing those commodities has steeply declined. Table 6.1 demonstrates the average production capacity per potato farm is sixty times what it was in 1951 while the total acreage in production throughout the province has

Table 6.1: New Brunswick Potato Farms and Acreage

Year	# Potato farms	#Acres Grown	Average Acres per farm reporting
1921	32,442	62,769	2
1931	29,053	60,260	2
1941	27,395	44,092	2
1951	20,004	38,123	2
1956	14,953	46,190	3
1961	8,190	54,165	7
1966	5,471	64,901	12
1971	1,212	59,421	49
1976	997	55,521	56
1981	740	53,793	73
1986	547	48,466	89
1991	442	50,621	115
1996	439	54,064	123

Potato acreage from 1921-1966 includes potatoes grown for home use and for sale. 1971 onwards only includes acreage grown for commercial sale. Table constructed from Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93-358-XPB, 1997: 18-19, 141.

remained quite stable. Likewise, Table 6.2 shows dairy farms have grown from an average size of four cows per farm to forty-three cows per farm. However, the number of dairy cows in the province have decreased substantially since 1951 as only one-quarter of the number of cows milked in 1951 continue to be milked on dairy farms in 1996. But the production capacity has not changed as dramatically as these figures might suggest because improved breeding and animal health care has resulted

in a larger volume of milk per cow (Statistics Canada, Catalogue #96-920, March 1984: 32).

Table 6.2: New Brunswick Dairy Farms and Number of Animals

Year	#Dairy Farms	# Cows Milked	Average # Cows per farm reporting
1921	31,494	106,486	3
1931	27,301	100,481	4
1941	26,790	114,764	4
1951	19,751	82,362	4
1956	16,107	85,581	5
1961	9,211	67,306	7
1966	5,629	52,201	9
1971	2,800	36,473	13
1976	1,702	30,510	18
1981	1,264	28,050	22
1986	879	26,740	30
1991	637	23,330	37
1996	496	21,265	43

1921 and 1931 includes all milk cows and heifers (including those under 2 years of age), from 1941 onward the numbers are for milk cows and heifers 2 years and over only. Table constructed from Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93-358-XPB, 1997: 18-19, 141.

As the average size of potato and dairy farms in the province have grown in size, the number of farms has steadily declined. In effect, some farms expanded, consolidated and at least in principle improved their cost efficiency as they did so — these are obviously the family farms the government was referring to when they stated their goal was to "strengthen the vitality of the family farm" (New Brunswick, 1977: 3). The government surely wasn't referring to the thousands of family farms which would inevitably go bust as neighbours bought up neighbours 'to expand and consolidate'.

One can only imagine that the government's true agricultural policy agenda of fewer but bigger farms would not have been well received since their strategy was to deliberately manipulate the notion of the "family farm". From reading government documents, it is clear the government of the day set out to confuse people about its intention to promote the accumulation of capital at the expense of traditional family farms by shifting the meaning of "family farming" from independent commodity

producers providing themselves with a livelihood to family owned businesses focused on the production of cheap inputs to food processors. The purpose of such a shift was to provide processing companies with a steady supply of raw materials — thereby, increasing rural employment opportunities — while retaining the familiar phrase "family farm". By changing the meaning of "family farming" but retaining its use, the state could enlarge and consolidate farm units and increase rural employment opportunities without a political backlash. Their tactics were occasionally made explicit, as in this 1974 statement from the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture:

> Alarmist stories about the impending disappearance of the family farm, vertical integration, and the take-over of the farming business by large corporations have little foundation in New Brunswick. It appears the family farm is likely to remain the basic form of production unit. The concept and philosophy of the family farm is to be preserved, *but its connotation must be altered* [my emphasis added]. To preface a program by the title "family farm" does not define the issue at hand (New Brunswick, 1974:14).

The "issue at hand" for the state and capital appears to have been how to build family owned capitalist farming businesses to meet the needs of the agri-food system at the expense of traditional family farms.

Over the years, the state's declared goal was for family farms to provide an "urban" standard of living and a prosperous business climate for the few farms which would remain (New Brunswick, 1974, 1977, 1994). To do this, farms had to provide a "reasonable return on investment", which could only be accomplished by changing the philosophy of farming from a "way of life" to a profit-oriented business venture. Driving small traditional farms out of farming effectively became government policy (New Brunswick, 1974, 1977, 1987, 1988).

In pursuing this goal, "successful" farms were no longer to be those which provided a secure way of life for farm families. Instead "family farms" were expanding, "successful" businesses operating within the agri-food system. Family farm businesses were simply one link in a much larger socio-economic system (Canada, 1981). To effectively work within and contribute to this overall system, "family farm" operations needed to be "efficient" production units. This vision of farming is clearly advanced in such statements as this one from the Department of Agriculture's Planning and Development Branch:

> It is urgently necessary to provide an economic climate in which farmers can expand their operations and, in which producers can develop the skills and command of resources to join the cadre of large scale and efficient producers. The thrust of the policies of the Department of Agriculture, particularly in meeting market needs must be with aiding the

commercial farmer and the efficient producer, and in adding to the numbers of such operators.

> The future of agriculture must be oriented towards rationally managed, profit-oriented businesses. Farm mergers and consolidation of holdings result in larger farm-units not only for increased production efficiency, but also to structure units that are large enough to afford better management. As the size of units increase, the financial requirements increase in complexity, and the ease of entry into commercial farming is cut drastically. Furthermore, as agriculture is encouraged to rationalize its management processes and organizational structure, a more clear separation of welfare and commercial farm policy and programs will emerge (New Brunswick, 1974: 9).

In the eyes of government agricultural policy, only McLaughlin's corporate family farm is an economically viable form of production — and it is these farms which have increased in numbers (see Appendix D). Small commercial family farm operations and subsistence farms are neither large scale nor efficient by comparison. In fact, in internal documents the government went so far as to say maintaining the small, commercial family farm is "in direct conflict with the goals of the agricultural sector" as they do not fill a large percentage of the agri-food systems needs[11] (New Brunswick, 1974: 14). Yet is very clear such farms have not completely disappeared from New Brunswick agriculture — even according to their own documents for they write:

> In 1981, there were over 4,000 census farms of which 2,200 could be classified as commercial with the remaining farms being part-time or small-scale (New Brunswick Agri-food Development Coordinating Committee, 1983: 9).

Despite the governments efforts to eradicate them, subsistence farms, hobby farms and smaller commercial family farms continue to persist beside corporate family farms and corporate farms in New Brunswick and Canada (McLaughlin, 1990; Statistics Canada, 1995).

This diversity in farm operations reflects different responses to agricultural restructuring and government policy. In other words, government agricultural policy may have been to build economically rational farm businesses but how farmers and their families interpret and respond to these economic policies appears to be far from uniform. In Chapter Five we saw how commercial dairy and potato operations have employed different technologies, approaches to labour and farming techniques to get their farming jobs done. Some have gotten large while others have remained small.

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[11] In other words, subsistence family farms and small-scale commercial family farm enterprises neither produce large volumes of raw materials for the processing market nor do they consume large volumes of farm inputs which means they are not financially embedded within the agri-food system.

Some are labour intensive, some are capital intensive. Some use family labour to get the job done, some use hired labour to get the job done. Some, like Barbara, have embraced the government's agenda by expanding and consolidating their operations; others, like Betty, have resisted the government's agenda by staying small and refusing to expand. Clearly, not everyone has responded to government policy, capitalist expansion and global restructuring in the same way — it is their differing responses which produce the variations in size, technology, labour relations and so on to be found on "family farms" today.

B. Two Strategies: Family Farming and Corporate Family Farming

It was the varying responses family farms had to government agricultural policy in New Brunswick which led McLaughlin (1990) to observe there are family farms pursuing commercial agriculture as a means to provide their family with a livelihood and family farms pursuing commercial agriculture as a profit oriented business endeavour. As we saw in Chapter Three, he classified these two kinds of commercial family farms as *family farms* and *corporate family farms*. While McLaughlin's labels may be unique, the phenomena he describes does not appear to be so.

Many other researchers have noted the presence of more than one kind of family farm in Canada[12] (Canada, 1995; Statistics Canada, 1995, July 1997; Goddard *et. al.*, 1993; Ehrensaft and Bollman, 1986; Shaver, 1990; Trant, 1986) . For example, it is very common to read about small and large farms, part-time and full-time farmers, petit-bourgeois and capitalist forms of production, family farms and family corporations in articles which discuss present day farming practices in New Brunswick and Canada. However, there is no consensus in the literature on which criteria to use to identify and define farm enterprises nor the language to describe and label them. As a result the names used to describe the various types of farm operations to be found in Canada vary from author to author (Canada, 1995; Statistics Canada, 1995, July 1997; Goddard *et. al.*, 1993; Ehrensaft and Bollman, 1986; Trant, 1986).

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[12] This literature falls within the mammoth volume of literature on 'family farming' in industrialised societies where extensive debates have occurred over the persistence of petit-bourgeois production within capitalist economies (the Marxist approach) and the prevalence of part-time and full-time farmers (the liberal economist approach). For a broader discussion of petit-bourgeois versus capitalist relations of production see Basran, 1992; Buttell *et. al.*, 1990; Clement, 1980 and 1983; Conway, 1981; Kasimis and Padadopoulos, 1995 and 1997; Koning, 1983; Shucksmith, 1991 and 1993; Sinclair, 1984; and Winson, 1996.

The literature on farm women's work has been plagued with similar inconsistences. For example, Alston (1995b) distinguishes between those farms which are capital intensive and those which are labour intensive. Whatmore's (1991b) concern with what she calls the commoditisation of farming — i.e. the extent to which farms have become commercial operations reliant on wage labour — leads her to argue there are 'family labour farms' and 'family business farms'. Whatmore's position is reminiscent of Shaver's (1990) discussion of the extent to which farms have modernised and developed capitalist relations of production. In her research, Shaver (1990) concluded there were three kinds of family farms: 'family labour farms', 'semi-capitalist farms' and 'capitalist farms'. Gasson (1980) meanwhile has tended to divide farms according to their physical size though in her later work with Errington (1993: 164) she does concur with Shaver that "the development of capitalist relations of production rather than size of business" is a more effective explanation for differences in a farm wife's involvement in the farm. In the end, Gasson and Errington (1993: 156) divide farms according to family-worked farms and labour-employing farms.

Despite the range of operational definitions and labels to be found in the literature, these rural sociologists and feminist scholars are all observing the same phenomena: different class positions among 'family farms'. In other words, some family farms continue to operate as petit-bourgeois production units while others have adopted capitalist relations of production. This section explores the impact such varying farming strategies and class positions have on farm wives' lives and work in New Brunswick. But first, it turns its attention to the evidence that there are indeed family farms pursuing farming as a 'way of life' and those pursuing farming as a 'business' activity among my case study respondents since many would argue family farms are *ipso facto* business enterprises.[13]

i. Evidence of Two Farming Strategies

As just mentioned, there is little consensus over the language or criteria to use when defining and identifying family farms. McLaughlin (1990), whose work is being used here, developed his typology of farming in New Brunswick by identifying the presence or absence of four dimensions[14]. Specifically, he asked:

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[13] This is certainly the position taken by Gasson and Errington (1993).

[14] I would like to thank John MacInnis for pointing this out to me.

1. Is the farm producing a commodity for commercial sale?
2. What is the ownership structure of the farm?
3. Is wage labour being used in the farm operation?
4. What are the aims of the farm's owners? or What is their motivation for farming?

As explained in Chapter Three, based on various answers to these questions he discerned four types of farm operations in New Brunswick: the hobby or subsistence farm, the family farm, the corporate family farm and the corporate farm. Since this project is interested in family owned and operated dairy and potato farms which are producing their commodity for commercial sale only McLaughlin's family farm and corporate family farm are relevant to this case study.

To review, *family farms* are petit-bourgeois operations trying to hold on to assets in order to maintain a 'way of life'. They rely largely on family labour and are engaged in commercial commodity production. Their goal is to stay in farming in order to make a living more so than for profits or expansion. *Corporate family farms* are also family owned and operated operations producing for commercial sale but they are dependent on wage labour because family labour is insufficient to get the job done. They seek to create a self-sustaining cycle of capital accumulation through expansion and business acumen. In essence, they would identify themselves as operating a farm business.

In this scheme, both family farms and corporate family farms are producing their farm commodity for commercial sale. And they are both family owned and operated enterprises. Even though they both use family labour, corporate family farms are also regularly dependent on wage labour whereas family farms rely almost exclusively on family labour.[15] According to McLaughlin, the other area where these two farm types differ substantially is in the farmer's and his family's motivation for farming. Farmers on 'family farms' farm in order to make a living from farming whereas farmers on 'corporate family farms' farm in order to make and accumulate capital. In other words, McLaughlin essentially argues on family farms farming is a 'way of life' while on corporate family farms farming is a 'business like any other business'.

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[15] Concentrating solely on the amount of hired labour as a means to distinguish one kind of farming from another may be problematic. As we saw in Chapter Five, one full-time regular employee on a dairy farm can relieve the family from daily milking whereas on a potato farm the least mechanised the operation, the more wage labour they are likely to employ during the fall harvest. Because different commodity sectors have different labour requirements, I would argue it does not supply sufficient data for distinguishing between family farms and corporate family farms.

While it is easy enough to establish whether or not farms employ waged labour on a regular basis, it is less obvious how to determine whether or not families are farming to sustain a way of life or to make a profit. Ascertaining where a way of life ends and profit making begins is especially challenging given all the family farms under study are commercial operations selling their products in the market place. Distinguishing between 'a way of life' and 'business prowess' is also difficult given that farm families are increasingly integrated into the nonfarm sector as both consumers and workers (Bollman and Smith, 1988; Fuller and Bollman, 1992; Green and Meyer, 1997). Does buying bread, fruit and vegetables constitute less of a farming 'way of life' than growing, harvesting and preserving them? Does taking 'off farm' work result in the preservation of a way of life or an opportunity for expansion? Even in this case study such questions are not easily answered. Nevertheless, it occurs to me the extent to which family farms attempt to separate family life from farm life is indicative of whether or not they are trying to maintain a 'way of life' or to establish a 'successful business enterprise'. This may seem contradictory since previous chapters and many other authors have argued it is difficult for farm wives to distinguish between their family household and their farm enterprise because 'family farming' geographically and socially combines family relations and work relations (Carbert, 1995; Ghorayshi, 1989; Koski, 1982; Reimer, 1986).

Even so, the boundaries between family and farm seem to be more clearly drawn for some farm families than for others. For instance, some family farms have formalised their business identities by incorporating. They are public liability companies with shareholders, elected officers and formalised business practices. Farms which have incorporated tend to formally separate family and farm finances as well. Given the presence of such formal business arrangements in the farm community, it should be possible to discern how separated or entwined family households and farm enterprises are by examining particular features of family farms — such as whether or not they are incorporated, how many bank accounts they have, their overall size, the degree to which they rely on hired labour and whether or not they want their children to farm. The more entangled the family and farm are, the more likely it is to be a 'family farm' engaged in petit-bourgeois production; while the greater the degree of separation between the family and the farm, the more likely it is to be a 'corporate family farm'.

From Table 6.3 it is evident dairy farms in New Brunswick have not chosen to organise their family farm affairs in the same manner. Some dairy farms have remained small, unincorporated enterprises operating family and farm finances from

one account. This group of farms continues to be mostly reliant on family labour.

Table 6.3: Farming Trajectories among Dairy Farms

	Size*	Incorporated	# Bank Accounts	Hired Labour†	Children to Farm?
Denise (retired)	12 cows	No	One	No	No
Dixie (left)	37 cows	No	One	1 p-t	No
Delia	37 cows	No	One	No	Not sure
Betty	~25 cows +55 acres	No	One	(son)	Hopeful
Daphne	35 cows	No	One	1 F-t	Not sure
Dawn	40 cows	No	One	1 F-t +(son)	Yes
Dotty	55 cows	No	One	(son)	Yes
Dolly	40 cows	No	Two	No	Hopeful
Dorothy	40 cows	No	Two	No	Hopeful
Deirdre	30 cows	No	Two	1 p-t	Hopeful
Donna	65 cows	No	Two	1 p-t	Yes
Diane	80 cows	No	Two	1 F-t	Yes
Debra	110 cows	No	Two	1 F-t	Hopeful
Danielle	110 cows	No	Two	2 F-t	Yes
Daisy	42 cows	Yes	Two	1 F-t/1 p-t	Not sure
Dayle	60 cows	Yes	Two	(son)	Yes
Debbie	70 cows	Yes	Two	1 F-t	Not sure
Barbara	65 cows+ 410 acres	Yes	Two	2 F-t + son	Yes

*Size for dairy farms refers to the number of cows milked daily not the herd size.
†Hired labour refers to employees who work all year round rather than those who are hired for special seasonal jobs; f-t/p-t means the employee works part time hours on a full-time, i.e. a permanent basis.

Unexpectedly, there is a degree of uncertainty among this group as to whether or not they would like their children to take over the farm.[16] Even so these dairy farms appear to have a great affinity between family and farm affairs. On the other hand, there are some dairy farms in the province which have formalised their business identities by incorporating. These farms tend to be substantially larger operations

[16] This finding is unexpected because many authors have argued a high motivation for family farming is to transfer the farm to the next generation — thereby preserving a way of life. That women have mixed feelings on this issue raises the question of whether or not passing on the farm is as high a concern for these 'family farms' as researchers have perceived it to be elsewhere (Delphy and Leonard, 1985; Gasson and Errington, 1993; Sachs, 1996).

reliant on wage labour. They also report having two bank accounts: one for the family household and one for the farm enterprise. This group also varies in terms of whether or not they want their children to farm. But in comparison to the first group, they show a much higher degree of separation between the family household and farm enterprise. Table 6.4 indicates a similar phenomena among potato farms in the province.

Table 6.4: Farming Trajectories among Potato Farms

	Size*	Incorporated	# Bank Accounts	Hired Labour†	Children to Farm?
Posy (retired)	275 acres	No	One	(son)	Yes
Paige	35-50 acres	No	One	No	Not sure
Betty	~25 cows +55 acres	No	One	(son)	Hopeful
Phoebe	150 acres	No	One	1 F-t	Not sure
Patricia	250 acres	Yes	One	(son)	Yes
Priscilla	250 acres	Yes	One	(son) + crew for 2nd business	Yes
Paula	25-30 acres	No	Two	No	Hopeful
Peggy	~125 acres	No	Two	No	Not sure
Pamela	300 acres	No	Three	(son) +1 F-t for 2nd business	Yes
Phyllis	310 acres	No	Three	(2 sons) + 1 F-t for 2nd business	Yes
Perdita	275 acres	Yes	Two	1 F-t	No
Barbara	410 acres +65 cows	Yes	Two	2 F-t	Yes
Penny	300 acres	Yes	Three	2 F-t for farm+ 2nd business	No
Pearl	400 acres	Yes	Three	4 F-t + crew for 2nd business	Hopeful

*Size refers to the acres of potatoes normally planted not the total arable land used for potatoes and rotation crops.
†Hired labour refers to employees who work all year round. It does not include those people who are hired for special seasonal jobs such as the potato harvest.

Among these potato farms it is worth noting both Patricia and Priscilla's farms have incorporated but they continue to operate family and farm finances from one bank account. At the same time, Table 6.4 reveals some potato farms have not incorporated but they do separate family, farm and in some instances the finances of a second business by operating each aspect of their lives from separate accounts. We need to realise combining family and farm finances in one bank account when a formal

business entity exists requires farm wives to maintain careful records of both family expenses and farm expenses to accurately complete the farm's income tax return. By maintaining separate bank accounts for family and farm they at least have the option of only keeping farm records rather than both farm and family records. However in the final analysis there is no definitive correlation between a farm's incorporation and the number of bank accounts they have. But Table 6.3 and Table 6.4 do indicate there is a tendency for the farm characteristics outlined above to cluster into several groups.

What is more, these clusters can be found in both commodity sectors which suggests organisational structures move across or beyond commodity sectors. For example, the bigger the operation, the more likely they are to rely on waged labour in addition to family labour to get the job done; and the more likely they are to have separated family and farm accounts. Whether or not the farm operation will have incorporated and become a public liability company is less certain; as is their desire to have their children continue farming. From these two tables it is clear a wide variety of family, farm and financial arrangements persist on both dairy and potato farms in the province.

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show in both commodity sectors some 'family farms' have been more 'successful' than others at separating the family household from the farm enterprise. Moreover, during my interviews, the way farm wives talked about their 'family farms' expose two contrasting approaches to farming. For example some farm wives, like Debra, drew clear lines between the farm and the family:

> There is a business and there is a marriage. Keeping them separate is a way to protect the business. I want the farm to stay as a farm — not necessarily in the family. We didn't farm for our kids. It would be nice but it wasn't our intention for farming. It puts too much pressure on everyone if that's why you're doing it.

But for others, establishing and maintaining a distinction between the two realms is a constant challenge as Penny informed me:

> The farm is as much a career as a job and it's a lot of work.... but my husband has been making a real effort to not bring the business home with him. He works set hours and he is here for the family on Saturdays. He takes that day off from the farm.... We don't see our children farming. We don't think the prospects are good in this province and people have negative attitudes towards farmers. We don't wish this stress on our children.

Others were not at all interested in such a mandate. Instead they argued farming provided a particular lifestyle at the same time it provided the family with a way 'to make a living'. For instance, Delia commented:

> We are a small operation. We make a living from farming. In the summer we have a few pigs and sometimes we have some chickens. My husband and children look after them. It's good for them to take responsibility for some things. ... We don't have a rigid set up. We just go with the flow.... Our son talks of taking over the farm and we would like him to but it's hard to have a good handle on where farming is going.

However, Delia's perception of farming is not shared by Donna who argued:

> Farm women are so different. It is hard to say they are this way or that because they all have different goals in mind. But the best couples are looking at the business together. I can't be in to get what I want out. I have to look at what's best for the farm business. People shouldn't be in business if they can't show a profit. The ones who are still here see farming as business ...Our ultimate goal is to set up all our boys in farming if that is what they want. You can't force them, it must come from within. But our goal is for our children to farm.

Undoubtedly Donna is right that farm women's motivations for farming can be quite different. But it is debatable as to whether or not all the family farms remaining in the province do indeed see farming as a business. Dotty, like Delia, provides a different rationale for farming when she says:

> Farming is a year to year, day by day thing. Our son farms with us and he wants to stay in so we'll try to keep going. We probably wouldn't do it if our son wasn't in it. But we've put a lot into it. Hired help doesn't have the same interest we do in keeping the farm going. Besides it would be difficult for the farm finances to hire some one to replace our labour. Our lives and our family are here. That's why we keep doing it.

Such statements, coupled with the data in Tables 6.3 and 6.4, suggest farm families in New Brunswick do show tendencies towards one type of 'family farming' over another. Some 'family farms' do appear to be 'corporate family farms' in that they have formalised their business arrangements through incorporation, they have separate household and farm accounts, they depend on hired labour to get the job done, and they are fundamentally more interested in running successful businesses than having their children take over the farm. At the same time, there are family owned and operated dairy and potato farms which are not incorporated, which have only one bank account for both family and farm transactions, which rely almost exclusively on family labour and that are interested in having their children farm — these farms clearly fall within McLaughlin's 'family farm' category.

In fact, Barbara and Betty, whose stories are told in Chapter One, exemplify the two extremes of present day commercial 'family farm' operations to be found in New Brunswick. As you may recall, Betty's family farm continues to combine the family and farm on many levels while Barbara's farm has taken great strides to separate the family and the farm as much as possible. Betty's approach to farming falls within McLaughlin's family farm while Barbara's approach to farming falls within the realm

of McLaughlin's corporate family farm. Clearly these two approaches to farming continue to coexist within the province despite government efforts to eradicate small, non-profit oriented farm enterprises. Some farm operations have resisted change, some are in transition and some have embraced change. It is this process of change which produces the messy reality of clusters rather than two groups with distinct boundaries. Even so, the case study data supports McLaughlin's typology as it indicates there are two groups of 'family farms' in the province with contrasting levels of integration between family and farm and contrasting perspectives on what 'family farms' are or ought to be. Consequently, we can conclude even though farm enterprises may be producing the same commodity, they do not necessarily have the same motivations for farming nor the same level of dependence on wage labour.

ii. Farm Wives' Work on Family Farms and Corporate Family Farms

The presence of more than one trajectory among the province's "family farms" adds a new layer of diversity among farm wives. For not only are farm wives living and working on farms producing different products under quite different circumstances, they are also living and working on farms which have different class positions. This finding is significant for the study of farm wives' work since as early as 1981, Flora argued farm women's work activities would vary as a consequence of their farm's class position[17]. Delphy and Leonard (1992)[18] make a similar claim when they state a woman's social position will influence the actual tasks she performs. This section briefly examines how the "family farms" farm wives live on — whether they be family farms or corporate family farms — affects their life and work. It does so by

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[17] Class is, of course, a complicated topic. Marxists are predominantly concerned with employers and workers — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat — those who own the means of production and those who do not. Liberals are also concerned with social and economic classes. They discuss the poor, the middle class and the upper class [see Brodie (1990) for a discussion of both liberal and Marxist analyses of class in the Canadian context]. In this discussion, I will be concentrating on Marxist rather than liberal issues since Marxists define their class positions by focusing on production variables— land, labour and capital — while liberals define their class positions by focusing on the market — people's ability to buy and sell. In the family farm literature most researchers have focused on *labour issues* to define and categorise different forms of "family farms" (Shaver, 1991; Whatmore, 1991; Gasson and Errington, 1993) which is why the Marxist approach is most relevant to this discussion.

[18] Innumerable feminist scholars make the same argument which is why the literature on women and work is replete with countless studies documenting women's working lives among the working class, petit-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie as well as the poor, middle class and the wealthy.

highlighting some observed differences in wives' domestic labour, farm work, cash generating and community work on family farms and corporate family farms.[19]

In the previous section we learned as family farms become corporate family farms sharper distinctions begin to develop between the family household and the farm operation. What is interesting is this not only pertains to how family and farm affairs are organised in terms of labour and finances but to physical space as well. For instance, as farms move towards formalising their business entities, they also move towards establishing more permanent office space. In addition, they take greater pains to mark the boundaries between the family household and the farm enterprise by creating visual barriers such as flower gardens. Both activities have a dual purpose: first, they improve the living surroundings of the family and secondly, they serve to delineate where the farm ends and the family begins. This latter point has generally been deemed a very difficult task for farm wives. However, my data suggests corporate family farms have managed to divide family space from farm space more than family farms have. Importantly, the variations which emerge in these groups' uses of space and their creation of spatial boundaries has consequences for farm wives' work.

First of all, on corporate family farms the family homestead and yard are often set apart and distinguished from the farmyard through elaborate flower gardens, fences, paved driveways and so on. Among the farms in my sample I would consider corporate family farms[20], the family home was usually very well maintained and a great deal of effort had obviously been spent to create an effect which would compete with any urban professional's home. Debra's farm, for instance, had all of the features mentioned above as did Barbara's, Penny's, Phyllis's, Debbie's and Dayle's farms. Often these houses were old farm homesteads which had been renovated and decorated by the farm family, which means a great deal of time, labour and money has been invested to make them meet or surpass 'middle class' standards. This is not to say other farm households were not immaculately preserved and maintained — some such

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[19] These questions open up an area of study which will require much further research beyond the preliminary case study results presented here. Especially since the feminist literature on women and work is fraught with similar questions. For example, how women's working lives differ as a result of their class position has been the subject of countless studies (see Armstrong and Armstrong, 1990).

[20] As you read down Tables 6.3 and 6.4 the farms move from family farms to corporate family farms — with the exception of Patricia and Priscilla who exhibit many attributes of corporate family farms but continue to operate family and farm finances from one account.

as Donna's, Dorothy's, Patricia's and Perdita's truly are — but the visual divide between family and farm was less acute on these farms than the former. This is because family farms tend to be less preoccupied with spatial boundaries. For instance, Priscilla's paved driveway, extensive flower beds and mudroom stood in sharp contrast to Paige's descriptions of how "the mud just comes in with you. There's no stopping it." The spring rains made little impact on Barbara's pristine yard but they played havoc with Betty's backyard.

Such differences in the presentation of the family yard correspond to differences in wives' work. In the first place, the amount of dirt tracked into the family household differs which means the amount of time spent cleaning floors differs. In the second place, elaborate flower gardens and yard work require a great deal of time for planning and implementation. Such work often falls on farm wives since the presentation of the family household and the grounds surrounding it tend to be considered part of the 'domestic' sphere. My interviews suggest wives on corporate family farms spend more time pruning flower gardens than tending vegetable gardens while the reverse is true for wives on family farms.

Even though wives on family farms and corporate family farms are both 'gardening', their purpose in doing so is markedly different. Maintaining elaborate flower gardens helps set the family sphere apart from the farm work sphere while maintaining large vegetable gardens helps the family establish self-sufficiency and sustain a 'way of life'.[21] Related to this finding is the observation farm wives on family farms continue to grow and preserve almost all of their family's food requirements whereas wives on corporate family farms do not. Dolly, for example, is quite typical of other farm wives on family farms:

> In many ways we are self-sufficient. We grow all of our own vegetables and meat besides milking the cows. We do this to try to keep the household costs down. That's why I do the vegetable garden. And we do our own meat and chickens. We take the meat to the butchers and he butchers and wraps it. ... I am happy with our system. It works.

Wives on corporate family farms report purchasing more foodstuffs. Of course, as we saw in Chapter Five, the stability of family incomes varies from one commodity sector to the next and all farm families attempt to economise on household purchases in one way or another. However, it was clear farm wives' motivations for economising

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[21] Clearly family farms have flower gardens and corporate family farms have vegetable gardens, it is the varying scales of these activities which sets them apart in a way which few have recognised.

varied in that some farm families do so in order to expand and others do so out of necessity. It seems to me farm wives who are economising in order to expand fall within the realm of corporate family farms and farms moving in that direction more so than within the realm of family farms. In effect, it is their varying motivations for farming which best accounts for these variations in farm wives' household labour.

Varying motivations for farming also help explain why some farm families have attempted to contain the extent to which farm life, i.e. the husband's job, spills into the family household and others have not. For example, some farms have taken great strides to keep the 'dirt' and 'mess' associated with farm activities from intruding into the family household. To that end, Diane has a clothes washer and dryer in the barn so the dirtiest work clothes never enter the house. On top of that she has a cavernous room to shed farm gear before entering the house. Many other houses had similar spaces — commonly known as mudrooms — which were clearly intended as the place to strip off farm gear before entering the house. Correspondingly, numerous dairy farms had bathrooms in the barn in order to keep farm mud out of the family home. In fact, Dolly and Daisy both said one improvement they would like is a bathroom in the barn, so people wouldn't have to walk in and out of the house with barn clothes on. On potato farms it was more common to have built a second bathroom within close proximity to a back door to minimise the amount of traipsing through the house. However, some potato farms like Priscilla's and Pearl's did have bathrooms located in exterior farm buildings. Like Dolly and Daisy, Perdita indicated a bathroom located in the potato house would be an improvement to having her husband and farm workers regularly entering the house. Again, the effects of bathrooms in the barn and anterooms are twofold. On the one hand, they reduce the amount of household cleaning that needs to be done. Tidying up is less cumbersome than scrubbing muddy floors. On the other hand, they help create a barrier between farm space and family space — between where the work sphere ends and the family sphere begins.

My overall impression is that farm wives who are attempting to establish sharper physical boundaries between the farm operation and the family sphere are much more likely to be corporate family farms or farms moving in that direction than family farms. In her research, Whatmore (1991b) also noted farm families try to establish physical boundaries between the family and the farm by creating a visual divide between the family home and the barnyard. However, her research does not establish whether or not class plays a role in the extent to which farm families draw such distinctions. My data suggests it does. In addition, Whatmore reports farm families have created clearly

defined office space in order to reduce the need to use 'family' space for farm business. In my study, I found this was particularly true on the corporate family farm.

It is the family farms in my study who are more apt to report using the kitchen table when tabulating farm accounts while corporate family farms are likely to report doing this work in a farm office. In accord with their whole attitude towards farming, family farms have such farm activities spilling over into what many would consider family space[22]. Meanwhile corporate family farms attempt to maintain clearer divisions between the two spheres by creating a farm office. This can be done by either converting an existing room in the family household into a 'home office', by adding an addition onto the house or by taking up office space in a building other than the family household. The first option is obviously the least costly and the one most families in my study have followed if they have opted for a formal farm office. Half the farm wives in my study had an established farm office. Interestingly, these farms were also the ones which had made a clear distinction between household finances and farm accounts. In effect, they were the farms which were more likely to see themselves operating profit oriented farm businesses rather than farming to sustain a way of life. Among these farms were Danielle and Pearl who had both set up farm offices within their homes in recent months. In Danielle's case they converted a room in the family household into an office. In Pearl's case it had meant adding an addition onto the house to accommodate a farm office. Both these women identified their farms as business enterprises and their new home offices were making it easier for them to do the book-keeping, answer the phone and provide other service work to their husbands' farming jobs. For example, Danielle explained the need for a farm office as follows:

> In ten years we will be even more of a business and less a 'way of life' than we are today....We needed a farm office so all our records and bookkeeping would be in one place. It was too hard to keep taking over the dining room table because we have more paper work than we used to. Now we have filing cabinets and a desk and we're going to set more things up on the computer. I can locate farm records and information a lot faster now.

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[22] This can happen in other family households as well — for example, when somebody goes back to school and takes over the dining room table; or when projects are undertaken which are too big for allotted space; or when people are just starting up new businesses etc. What is relevant is this is a continued practice on family farms whereas corporate family farms seek to change such arrangements through the creation of a farm office.

Danielle has not yet formed a set office work schedule but Pearl has. Pearl told me she spends four to six hours a day working in the farm office as do Barbara, Phyllis, and Priscilla.

There are two important issues here for farm wives' work. First of all, simply by creating a farm office farm wives will increase the amount of time they spend 'in the office' since without an office one cannot spend time there. This may seem pedantic. However, working in the farm office for a specified amount of time each day is likely to translate into a clearer conception of 'work' time and 'family' time for farm wives than doing the same tasks at the kitchen table. Wives who have office hours, i.e. set times they are at work, are more likely to view their phone answering, paperwork and bookkeeping as secretarial and management work than those who do not. They are also more likely to identify their farm operations as 'business' enterprises. In short, the greater the farm's propensity is towards corporate family farming, the more likely they are to have well defined farm offices with wives working in them on a regular basis. Secondly, I found farm wives who had clear office hours almost always receive a salary for this work.[23] This is in part because farm wives in this situation can more easily identify the amount of secretarial and management service work they are contributing to their farm operations than farm wives who are fitting the same services into their overall work patterns can. Since they can quantify their time spent in the farm office, it is easier for them to justify a salary.

In general, as farm families reduce the interplay between family and farm space they take on a stronger business orientation. In effect, the ability on corporate family farms to divide space into distinct areas results in clearer 'work' times and 'family' times for these farm wives and their families. Recall for instance, how Penny's husband is "making a real effort not to bring the business home with him". Interestingly, her farm also provides the most dramatic example of physically separating the family and farm space since the family home is located hundreds of miles away from the potato fields. However it is far more common for farm wives to establish boundaries by creating divisions between the family homestead and barnyard using gardens and mudrooms and minimising the amount of trekking family members do through the household with farm clothes on. These latter activities also serve to reduce domestic labour since mud and dirt are not brought into the house as much.

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[23] Whether or not their wages reflect true market value is another matter.

It is also interesting to note, as spatial boundaries between the farm enterprise and the family household become more pronounced so too do differences in what women do.[24] Women on corporate family farms are more likely to spend time in the farm office providing secretarial services to the farm operation than are women on family farms. Conversely, women on family farms are more likely to work in farm production than women on corporate family farms. In other words, Delphy and Leonard's (1994) claim a farm wives' social position influences the actual tasks she performs is supported by my data. In fact, Gasson and Errington report a similar finding:

> On smaller, less mechanized farms and family-labour farms in the UK and elsewhere, the wife's contribution is typically larger....Although wives on larger farms are generally less involved in manual work [than wives on smaller farms], they do not necessarily put in fewer hours in total for the business, devoting their time instead to office work, administration and a share in management (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 157, 163-164).

What Gasson and Errington overlook is that these differences in farm wives' work reflect differences in their husbands' farming job. That is to say, increased office time for a farm wife frequently coincides with changes in her husband's farming job. Pearl's husband, for example, is no longer working in farm production. Instead he leaves day to day farm operations to a foreman while he plans and organises financing, expansion and other management tasks.

Unfortunately many researchers have demonstrated farm wives' work varies according to the social relations of production (Gasson, 1980; Smith, 1987; Shaver, 1991; Whatmore, 1991; Gasson and Errington, 1993) without taking into account the theoretical significance of such findings. To use another example from Gasson and Errington, they found:

> Wives [are] more intimately involved in all aspects of the farm business on family-worked farms [family farms] than on labour-employing farms [corporate family farms], whatever their size (Gasson and Errington, 1993: 156).

But so, I would argue, are farm husbands! In fact, in an earlier piece Gasson (1989:18) notes:

> In their North Humberside study, Symes and Marsden found that the wife's role in the farm business was largely a reflection of the husband's role; where the farmer put in long hours of manual work the wife was likely to do the same. Britton and Hill (1975) too noted a tendency for farmer' and wives' manual hours to vary in the same direction.

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[24] What women do, of course, dictates where in fact they spend their time — i.e. their spatial location of work.

One reason why researchers miss the correlation between farm husbands' and farm wives' work is because they are intent on demonstrating the gendered division of labour between husbands and wives. Such a mandate leads Smith to conclude:

> In simple farming operations, women have broader involvement. They are more active in decision making, and also do a greater variety of jobs. More highly mechanized or specialized farms may entail a greater division of work. Men carry out more specialized farm tasks, while women perform the managerial work of bookkeeping, maintaining market information, and dealing with supplies and services (Smith, 1987: 166-167).

As farms get bigger and hire more wage labour, a farmer's management work increases. Managing farm production on a corporate family farm can no longer be accomplished by sitting with family members at the kitchen table. Pearl argued planning, organising and foreseeing solutions to potential production problems is more demanding when hired non-family labour is involved:

> With McCains you can't plan — and it costs us a lot in lost time with employees. It's okay if it's only us. But not when you're paying people. You can't have them sitting around waiting for McCains to call.

Given that corporate family farmers are managing more workers and a larger production capacity than family farmers, it is hardly surprising farm wives on corporate family farms are doing more bookkeeping and accounting work than farm wives on family farms. What is surprising is that researchers like Gasson and Errington (1993) have failed to explain these differences in farm wives' work as indicative of differences in their husbands' farming jobs. They are unable to recognise the impact differences between farmers and their work have on wives and their work. This is in part because they do not perceive the gentleman farmer, who is a landowner, who relies almost completely on hired labour and who effectively works as a 'farm manager' — i.e. the most likely scenario to be found on bigger rather than smaller farms — as engaged in different work than the farmer on a smaller holding who is himself directly engaged in farm production. In effect, Gasson's (1980) ideal types — farm housewives and working farm wives — really echo differences to be found amongst male farmers. Precisely because the work of male farmers differs as a consequence of size and social relations of production, farm wives become incorporated into their husbands' work in different ways — a point she neglects to make.

Whatmore (1991: 97) too fails to make this connection. She argues there are family labour farms and family business enterprises, a distinction which resembles family farms and corporate family farms. Women associated with family labour farms are viewed as 'working farm wives' and those associated with family business enterprises

are 'incorporated wives'. In her schema it is only family business farms which 'incorporate' their wives as family labour farms beget 'working farm wives'. The fact that all farm wives are incorporated into their husbands' work — as was clearly demonstrated in Chapter Four — is missed by Whatmore. It is also worth noting her contrasting work scenarios for farm women reflect Gasson's working farm wife and farm housewife. In the end, both Gasson and Whatmore fail to recognise that the variations they see among farm wives and their work are simply a reflection of the different class positions and farming jobs which exist among farmers and their work.

Looking beyond wives' involvement in farm work to their cash generating work, it seems that commodity is a more important predictor of whether or not wives will work 'off the farm' than their class position. Rather than indicate whether or not they will work for cash, farm wives' class position is more likely to elucidate the kind of work they will do. While my case study findings are inconclusive in this regard, it is highly probable farm wives on family farms will find themselves working as employees or in farm-related diversification projects while wives on corporate family farms will find themselves employing wage labour in nonfarm related business ventures. Again Betty and Barbara illustrate this point: Betty who lives on a family farm earned cash by selling eggs to over one hundred customers. Her cash generating work was a farm related diversification project in that it could not have been achieved without a farm. Barbara's cash generating work changed a lot throughout her life time — but it also changed in accord with the farm's class position. When it was a family farm, she earned a wage; as it became a corporate family farm she set up a gift shop. While her gift shop remained small enough that she never employed anyone, it stood quite apart from the farm and was not dependent on it for any raw materials. I would also speculate nonfarm related diversification projects are far more feasible on corporate family farms because there is likely to be more capital available — for example, from a farm salary — for start up costs. Besides wives on corporate family farms often have more experience with paperwork, grant applications and loan processes than wives on family farms.

In effect, as their family farms and their husbands' farming jobs change so too do the tasks farm wives undertake for their husbands. Their husbands' changing farms and jobs require adjustments in terms of how much time wives are required to spend on certain tasks which in turn dicatates where exactly they will work — i.e. their

spatial location[25]. Changes in husbands' jobs and the farm operation are manifested in a clearer distinction between family space and farm space and in marked differences in farm wives' work activities, as Flora (1981) and Delphy and Leonard (1992) speculated. Farm wives on family farms put more of their labour time into farm production while wives on corporate family farms put more of their time into management and office work. Obviously, more research needs to be done to ascertain the extent to which wives' farm work varies within a commodity sector as a result of social class. To date, most researchers have examined capitalist relations of production without regard for a farm's commodity production. In the last chapter we saw, different commodity sectors have different work requirements and work rhythms which influence how and when farm wives will be drawn into farm production. Hired farm labour can mean farm wives are no longer needed in farm production but farm wives continue to be incorporated into their husbands' farming jobs — it is simply the form their contributions take which changes as their husbands' jobs change. It is the presence of differing class positions within a commodity sector which help explain why variations exist in farm wives' work even when they are producing the same commodity and why similarities exist in farm wives' work even though they are producing different commodities.

II. Farm Wives' Changing Status

Since they and their farms are embedded in a much larger social world, activities beyond the farm gate are also affecting farm wives' lives and work. Like the rest of the world, New Brunswick has witnessed the changing status of women. Women's changing status has made higher education more accessible to women; it has made it easier for women to continue careers after marriage and child birth; and it has encouraged a stronger political activism among women. As society's attitudes towards women and work have changed, some women have succeeded in breaking the barriers by gaining access to traditionally male domains and activities — such as politics and engineering; other women have continued to work in traditionally female occupations — such as teaching and nursing. Some women are in top executive, middle class or professional occupations while others are working in dead end, low paying jobs.

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[25] It seems to me this is is an indicator of how farm wives have been incorporated into their husbands' jobs. This realisation provides insight into why so many researchers studying farm women's work have been preoccupied with the amount of time women spend in various spatial work locations.

Despite liberal feminism's push for a level playing field, women are not equal.[26] In other words, there are quite a range of social, economic and political experiences among women in society. It is only logical, therefore, to expect a similar range of social, economic and political experiences among farm women as is to be found among women in the general population since farm women are living with and dealing with the same larger social world as other women.

This section of the chapter examines three issues of women's changing status which have had important consequences for farm wives' lives and work in New Brunswick. First, it explores how agricultural and tax policy have affected farm wives' status on the "family farm". Secondly, it highlights how changes in the matrimonial property laws have affected farm wives' lives. Thirdly, it briefly discusses farm wives' political involvement in farm organisations.

A. Getting Paid for Farm Work

Before 1980, wives who were working regular hours in farm production or in the farm office doing bookkeeping, secretarial and management work on unincorporated family farms[27], i.e. those farms which were not public liability companies, could not be paid wages or a salary as a legitimate farm business expense. As a result wives who put their labour into the farm instead of into 'off farm' work or careers were unable to pay into the Canada Pension Plan or receive unemployment insurance. They were also ineligible to pay into and receive workers' compensation if they were injured on the job (McNair,1980; Bruners, 1985; McCall, 1995).[28]

Keeping wives as unpaid workers effectively establishes them as volunteers, helpers, auxiliary, Girl Fridays, pinch hitters and so on. It further serves to incorporate them into their husbands' farm work on all the levels we saw in Chapter

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[26] While it is perhaps naive to believe a level playing field can be achieved, assuming everybody is on a level playing field enables liberal thinkers to view class diversity as meritocratic, i.e. those who work hardest will reap the benefits of higher pay. In other words, those at the 'top' of the economic ladder have climbed there through hard work and dedication to their chosen profession. But, I would contend, it is debatable whether or not those at the top are indeed working any harder than those at the bottom (for example, see Duffy and Mandel, 1994).

[27] This tax law applied to all wives working in their husbands' businesses — farm and nonfarm alike.

[28] Ironically children who worked in the 'family' business could be paid wages and salaries as a legitimate business expense — and were, therefore eligible for all these programs. Such a tax policy effectively sanctioned and reinforced the social expectation wives would contribute to and support their husbands' jobs through unpaid auxiliary work.

Four. At this time most farm wives in Canada also did not have equal access to the land, labour and capital accumulated during the marriage, so working for the farm was essentially a 'labour of love' — and wives who did farm work like Irene Murdoch were acting like "any farm wife". It was these practices which led Dorothy Smith (1979) to argue the labour of farm wives was being appropriated by their husbands. The unfair and unequal distribution of resources within the family farm operation, as well as the gendered division of labour, has subsequently been the study of much research (Delphy and Leonard, 1985 and 1992; Boivin, 1987; Smith, 1987; Whatmore, 1991). What is of interest here, however, is how tax law has reflected wider state policy to incorporate farm wives into their husbands' farming jobs.

In 1972, the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture and Rural Development were keen to provide agricultural training to farm wives. In the fall of that year, they wrote:

> It is obvious that New Brunswick farm firms need all the good management help they can get and wives offer a potential solution. Most farm wives are an untapped management resource, in the sense that training agencies have not recognized their contributions and have not invested in training them. Farm wives are capable of learning and with the introduction of modern labour saving devices in the farm home and the changing role of women in society, they are becoming more and more available for training opportunities. We should not let this opportunity to improve the management team on New Brunswick farms go unexploited (New Brunswick, 1972: 10).

There were apparently no qualms about exploiting these very same wives. Farm wives it seems would be willing to invest their time and efforts into training and then work in management for nothing. Such a perspective suggests the province's agricultural policy was to have wives work with and for their husbands thereby obtaining 'two for the price of one'. This position is born out by other government documents. For example, one study argues "an increase in family wages [including wages to wives and children] would decrease net farm income but leave family income unchanged" (Statistics Canada, June 1993: 10). This statement only makes sense if you presume net farm income or profits are equally shared or ploughed into the family household — a scenario which certainly does not emerge among my interview respondents.

Most of the farm wives in my study who are paid for 'farm work' — i.e. cash earnings from work in farm production, management, office secretarial work or bookkeeping — use their wages and salary to run the family household. The family's income — i.e. the money which will be spent on family necessities, 'luxuries', and home improvements — depends on the salary they receive more so than the farm's net income or profits. Donna, for instance, told me:

> I get paid $12,000 a year for the farm work I do.... That's what I use to run the household....We've made do with lots less money to get where we are today. Most people receive a pay cheque as their reward for working nine to five. Here it has to be enough that you know what you did and your husband knows what you've done.

Frequently a husband's 'salary' from farming is ploughed back into the farm. It can be used to pay down farm debt, to enable expansion or to cover operating costs — including the salary of non-family members. Daisy explained:

> If the farm was making money, I'd take a salary. But I don't feel I can take money out of the farm for the house or savings. As it is we can't always afford to pay my husband his salary. He never gets a full year's pay during the year.

On the other hand, Patricia reported:

> On paper we are both taking a salary but in reality we leave the money in the account so it gets used for the farm since we operate both from the same account. I keep costs down as much as possible. I used to be able to keep costs below $10,000 but the costs of things are going up and it's getting closer to $15,000 a year. I don't buy any more. It just costs more.

The 'incomes' Donna and Patricia report using to run the family household fall below the country's national poverty line (Duffy and Mandel, 1994) and while other women did not indicate how much they earned from farm work, the impression they left was it was not a substantial amount.

Current tax law permits farm wives to be paid an amount commensurate with the work they actually do. As McCall (1995: 33) puts it:

> Now the only limitation on hiring family members is that the work be necessary for the farming business and that the compensation paid be reasonable for the work done.

How farm wives' 'farm work' is to be measured and adequately rewarded remains unclear. Especially since farm wives are often doing many tasks at once, and their work is often occurring in many different places, it is hard to assess whether or not they are receiving 'reasonable pay' for the work they actually do. Wives on corporate family farms who are spending set amounts of time in the farm office can at least keep track of those hours without difficulty — but are they being paid the wages of an accountant's assistant, the wages of a manager or managerial assistant or the wages of a secretary? What is commensurate with the work they are doing? How do wives on family farms keep track of their hours in farm and 'management' work? Do the salaries of wives on dairy farms and potato farms reflect the differing time and labour requirements of production? Are farm wives paid over-time for working during the fall harvest or staying up with a calving cow? Is their stress management work recognised for the counselling work it entails and paid as such? In other words, farm wives may

now be paid a salary for farm work but it is unclear as to whether or not they are indeed adequately compensated for the work they actually do to keep the farm operation running smoothly.

Overall, my data suggests farm wives on family farms are less likely to take a salary than wives on corporate family farms. The reasons for this are twofold. First, family farms tend to be smaller operations with less capital, therefore there is less likely to be the cash flow for a regular salary — especially on potato farms. Corporate family farms may not have high profit margins or adequate cash flows but they are more likely to have established the farm enterprise as a separate business entity. Therefore, household money requires a cash wage or salary. Secondly, related to this, is that taking a salary for farm work is indicative of the extent to which family and farm have separated their affairs on corporate family farms; while not taking a salary is indicative of the extent to which family and farm affairs remain entwined on family farms[29].

In fact, Duchesne (1989: 11-14) reports, many women continue to do farm work for no pay:

> Unpaid family work on a farm is a form of labour more common among women than men. In 1946, 84% of all women employed [sic] in agriculture were not paid compared with 22% of men. By 1987, one in three women were working without pay while only 1 in 24 men were doing so.

Among my case study respondents, Debra perhaps remains the most unique in this regard. As reported in Chapter Four, Debra is a widow who continues to work for her in-laws on a full-time basis without receiving a salary. According to her, she is receiving "free living" but one has to at least question at what cost since she is not legally entitled to the farm property as her husband was also an employee on his parents' 'family' farm. In fact, as McCall explains, the legal labyrinth taking a salary creates may help elucidate why some farm wives opt to remain unpaid workers contributing to their husbands' farming job:

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[29] This finding supports Whatmore's (1991) claim that the extent of capitalist relations of production rather than farm size is the crucial factor for interpreting 'variations in the payment of wives'. Similarly, Gasson and Errington argue "...the family-worked farm does not need to make a distinction between wages and profits in its internal accounting, and can subsidize its cost of production by exploiting family labour" (1993: 174-175). However, their position fails to see the way corporate family farms can also subsidise the cost of production by not paying farm wives a wage commensurate with the work they do.

> Even though farm operators are now permitted to hire family members on the same basis as other employees, many spouses do not wish to take advantage of this possibility. If the marriage is viewed as a partnership of two people working together towards common goals, an employer-employee relationship may not seem to or be compatible with that view. The dynamics of a partnership and an employer-employee relationship are very different — working with and working for. Despite the economic advantages which may be gained, the hiring of one spouse by the other may have the effect of undermining the strength of the marital partnership. Many women are also concerned that, if they have been employed by their husbands and the marriage ends, they will be denied their right to share in the farm property and business because they have been paid for their work (McCall, 1995: 35).

While these comments are supported by my case study data, they do not entirely help explain why Debra remains so committed to the farm operation — especially since she is not certain whether or not her son is willing or able to take over the farm in the future.

In the end, some farm wives may have seen their farm work shift from unpaid to paid work; however, it remains questionable whether or not this shift has improved their lives. It certainly adds a new layer of questions which remain unanswered at this point. But 'off farm' employment may not necessarily be the answer either since it raises another set of issues — such as the job market situation, farm wives' suitability for available employment[30] and their ability to access needed resources such as child care and transportation (Boivin, 1987). Not to mention their existing farm and family schedules and/or the amount of flexibility it affords farm wives to obtain the time — in the right time slots — their potential 'off farm' work requires. Limited opportunities, time and resources to pursue 'off farm' work may lead farm wives to opt for:

- their own farm-oriented business — such as Betty's egg business and Pamela's cattle operation;
- a farm house based business — possibly but not necessarily farm related — for example a bed and breakfast, craft production, sewing services or a bake shop;
- intensifying household labour to reduce household costs (grow and preserve family's food requirements, sew clothes, make crafts);
- farm work — unpaid and paid — to reduce farm costs; or
- some combination of the above.

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[30] See Appendix G for table summaries of the socio-personal characteristics (age, educational attainment and career training) of my case study respondents.

Deidre, for instance, exemplifies this final approach:

> [Once my five children were born] it paid me to stay home once you calculated in the costs of working: paying baby sitters, buying working clothes and paying for gas to drive to and from work, etc.... I now do things I can do from home but it's not a major income. For example, I sew and mend clothes for people; I bake cakes for special occasions like birthdays, weddings and special occasions; I make decorations and fresh flower arrangements for weddings; and I do some photography work but it's hard to do this kind of work with all the children. I do it at night once they've gone to bed. I have a little bit of this kind of work all year round.

At another point in the interview, Deidre indicated:

> As my father-in-law is phased out, I am being phased into more farm work....When my children are all in school I would like to set up my own [farm related] business. But with my father-in-law retiring I will probably be working full-time on the farm with my husband and the children will be helping us out. I am here doing nothing so to speak so why should he pay somebody else to do what I could do? There are some things I wouldn't like doing. But if I start with a little I will end up with a lot. Things will work out. We will all just have to adjust to things.

Deidre lives on a family farm and is not currently being paid a salary for any of the work she does do for the farm. Even so it remains hard to believe she can still envision herself "here doing nothing so to speak" given her efforts at cash generation work not to mention child care and farm related work. It just goes to show how difficult it is to break down the long engraved belief 'wives are helpers' and their contributions represent the work of 'any ranch wife'. Changes in tax policy may be making it easier to pay farm wives but it is not necessarily transforming farm wives' status.

B. Changes in Matrimonial Property Laws

As we learned in Chapter Three, the Supreme Court of Canada's handling of the Murdoch case spurred farm women and women's groups in Canada into action. They demanded changes in family law — specifically changes to provincial matrimonial property acts — giving husbands and wives joint ownership of assets accumulated during the marriage (Atcheson *et. al.*, 1984; Hale, 1990; Weitzman, 1981). This way, wives' contributions to the family household or family business would not go unrecognised even if they did continue to be unpaid. Feminist groups believed women's lives — farm and nonfarm alike — would be fundamentally transformed through such legislative changes. In fact, according to them, these changes would pave the way for wives to have legal equality with their husbands in all political, economic and social interactions (Bruners, 1985).[31] Slightly more than fifteen years

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[31] Of course, they argued farm women would also need access to child care, training programs, equal access to credit, health and safety programs, job opportunities and new government tax regulations

later, it is less than clear whether or not farm wives in New Brunswick are really benefiting from these changes.

According to the Farm Women's Bureau, many farm wives are involved in the farm operation to the point where they identify themselves as partners but they continue to lack formal partnership agreements:

> Forty-five per cent of farm women say they are 'partners', but only nine per cent of all types of family farms have partnership agreements or incorporation papers (Canada, 1991: 6).

Therefore, whether or not the courts would concur with a farm wife's claim to partnership remains suspect. Among my case study respondents almost half continue to operate without formal operating agreements — and some of these are inter- and intra- generational farms! — as Table 6.5 illustrates:

Table 6.5: Farms Legal Status

	Potatoes	Dairy	Total
Farms Incorporated (PLC)	6	3	9
Written Partnership Agreement	2	2	4
Unwritten Partnership Agreement	1	2	3
No formal Agreement	5	9	14
Total	14	16	30

Coupled with those with unwritten agreements, less than half actually have formal business documents. Again this reflects the family farm versus corporate family farm split within the agricultural sector — but it also reveals commodity differences. Potato farms are more likely to have formalised their business arrangements than dairy farms because there is a higher incidence of 'extended family' farms in this commodity sector.

Since in these cases the partnerships are often between brothers or fathers and sons, it remains questionable as to whether or not wives are actually reaping the benefits of these formal partnership agreements. For example, Debbie's farm is an intragenerational farm owned and operated by three brothers. It is among the

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like those discussed in the last section if farm wives were to achieve greater equality with their farm husbands (see the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1987). Their analysis was that farm women needed equality of opportunity with farm men and urban women. By eliminating sexism and providing an urban level of services and opportunities, farm women would achieve independence and escape exploitation. This, liberal feminists believed, would free women from the most oppressive relationships in which they found themselves.

incorporated farms but Debbie's name is not on any of the farm property deeds, nor is she a share holder or farm owner in the farm corporation. What is more, before she married in 1979 — no doubt as a consequence of the impending changes to the matrimonial property act — Debbie signed a pre-nuptial agreement relinquishing any and all claims on the farm assets and property. For Debbie changes to the matrimonial property act have not translated into economic security. It is unclear how exactly the value of her husband's share or his farm equity would be established and distributed in the event of his death. Additionally, if she and her husband should become separated or divorced she would undoubtedly lose her job since she works as a farm employee. This then is not the secure economic future those initiating changes to the matrimonial property laws predicted.

In fact, changes to the matrimonial property act have caused many parents to bring their sons into the family farm operation as employees rather than as business partners. By paying their son(s) a salary, they reduce their claim to the family farm assets. As Dawn explained:

> My son is very frustrated because he keeps working for us but he doesn't own part of the farm. Really my husband couldn't have done it without him. But we must be careful too. If we divide ownership and my daughter-in-law decides to pull out she would be half owner. Losing a quarter of our assets would put us in jeopardy. That's why we just pay him a salary and we keep ownership.

Such arrangements can mean the situation for daughter-in-laws is really no different than the one women experienced before changes to the matrimonial property laws occurred. Related to this many women indicated their names were not on farm property deeds — and some farm wives had their names on some property deeds but not on others. Therefore, what exactly they have title to is not well established.

Yet, the changes in the matrimonial property act have prompted banks and lending institutions to have wives sign for farm loans because not only are assets accumulated during marriage jointly owned but so are the debts accumulated during the marriage. McCall (1995: 26-27) explains:

> Lending institutions may...require women to accept financial responsibility for purchases or operating loans for farms in which they are not involved as operators, particularly if they have an off-farm income. Women have been required to sign loan guarantees for their husbands or co-sign mortgages and loans, often with no opportunity to obtain independent legal advice...If the family home on a separate parcel has been used as collateral for a farm loan, a family could lose both.

Having access to the farm assets accumulated during marriage thus comes with a price. The practice of lending institutions to have wives sign for farm loans actively makes

them responsible for farm debt. In order to finance farm debt they are being forced to relinquish their claim on farm assets in the event of bankruptcy, separation or divorce. In this climate it is hardly surprising to find farm wives in New Brunswick and Canada have a vested interest in seeing the farm succeed — an interest which extends beyond the family farm unit into political activism.[32]

C. Farm Wives' Political Involvement and Action

In fact, one of the newest areas of research on farm women is their increasing political involvement and action in farm related organisations (Carbert, 1995; MacKenzie, 1994; Shortall, 1994; Wiebe, 1995). To borrow Wiebe's (1995: 160) analysis, farm wives are interested not only in *women's issues* — like child care, gender equity, community services, power and decision-making — but in *real farm issues* — like product marketing, commodity production and pricing — as well. Nevertheless, a great deal of tension exists among farm women's organisations in terms of where resources, time and efforts are best spent. For instance, in discussing the various mandates of farm women's organisations in Canada, Wiebe (1995: 161) argues:

> Farm women activists can be tempted to stay with the social or women's issues because there is more likely to be agreement on the needs and solutions in that sphere. The current trend towards interorganizational consultations and even joint projects between the various farm women's organizations seem to demonstrate this. The national networking conferences of the 1980s, which dealt more with general farm policy issues, resulted in few concrete agreements, while the first national conference on rural child care, which had delegates from all the major farm women's organizations in Canada, passed a unanimous resolution on rural child care.

What is abundantly clear from Wiebe's discussion of farm wives' political involvement and action in farm women's organisations in Canada is the range of issues and concerns they are confronting.

The respondents in my case study also identified a number of contrasting issues and concerns facing farm communities, their families and their status within the farm community. However, overall, I found wives on corporate family farms were more likely to be involved in farm women's organisations than those on family farms. Of course, as we saw in the last chapter, participation in all community activities is modulated by the amount of time wives have available and when meetings are scheduled. But, it appears farm women's organisations generally tend to attract

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[32] Shortall (1993), for example, found farm wives in Canada were more politically active than farm wives in Ireland; but, I would counter, this is surely a consequence of the responsibilities Canadian farm wives have taken on by signing on the dotted line for farm bank loans.

women on corporate family farms more so than women on family farms. In part, I believe because even when such organisations are dealing with 'women's issues' rather than 'real farm issues' they are oriented to farming as a business rather than farming as a 'way of life'. For example, the New Brunswick Farm Women's Network (NBFWN) states in their membership brochure that their goal is:

> To encourage farm women in New Brunswick to be educated in their fields, to be informed of the facts, to use knowledge and abilities to gain experience, and most of all to use their experience to make New Brunswick Family Farms efficient, productive and sustainable businesses of the future.

Among my respondents none of those I would consider to be family farms were members of this organisation, while half of those who are on corporate family farms belong to this group. From my participation in their meetings, it is clear there is a real division amongst the membership over their organisation's goals and what they should be trying to achieve. I do not believe these women see the class divisions amongst themselves I do — or if they do, they have not articulated their class divisions in such a way as to bridge them. But their failure to see class divisions does not entirely surprise me since these organizations are government funded and their documents and positions effectively mirror government agricultural policy. To site an example, the NBFWN's membership brochure outlines their purpose as follows:

> 1. To act as a business organization representing women who work in family farm enterprises.
>
> 2. To enhance the quality of life of farm women through education, information and experience.
>
> 3. To provide an audience for farm women to express their concerns and to provide a forum for resolving these concerns, in conjunction with other farm organizations.
>
> 4. To preserve the family farm and respect for the family farm lifestyle.

What seems to be missing is an understanding that a 'way of life' can be quite different than a profit-oriented business venture. Wives on corporate family farms are more interested in these organisations because they can network and gather relevant information for their farming businesses. Their participation in such organisations is, in effect, a peripheral form of incorporation into their husbands' jobs because they gather information appropriate to their farms on the political and economic aspects of farming in the province, available grant and crop insurance monies and the issues confronting other farms in the region. But clearly to be effective voices for all farm women, farm women's organisations must embrace and represent the motivations and farming goals of all farm families not just those aimed at functioning as businesses.

This fundamental split in the farm community has had and continues to have real consequences for farm wives and their family farms.

But one thing remains certain, the changing status of farm women has not necessarily improved farm wives' situation on either family farms or corporate family farms. In 1973, Dorothy Smith argued husbands appropriated their wives' labour by reaping the benefits of that labour. In today's economic climate, state policy endorses corporations and banks to appropriate it in a manner very much in line with Finch's (1983) observation that wives provide employers and institutions "two for the price of one".[33] Basically, viewing men as independent farmers appropriating their wife's labour fails to see how they are both tied into the much larger agri-food system. In the end, farm wives' contributions to the farm operation continue to be taken for granted by family members, courts, the Canadian government and agribusiness. Their continued incorporation into their husbands' farming job effectively enables Canada to sustain its cheap food policy (Koski, 1982). Consequently, despite the positive changes in women's political and socio-economic status in society as a whole, farm women's position has not improved as much as those supporting law reform might have expected.

III. The Ever Changing Agricultural Scene

Everyday farm wives in New Brunswick are coping with changing expectations, the changing status of women, agricultural restructuring, changing family farms, changing market conditions, changing communities, changing families and so on. Depending upon the particular issue, they have at times initiated changes and at other times they have resisted them. Along with government, industry, and their farming husbands, they have been both the agents and recipients of the wide sweeping changes taking place in their farm communities. Collectively their actions have created the situations they and their family farms encounter and will continue to encounter in the future. If the general public, government, industry, farmers and farm wives continue to respond as they have and the historical processes discussed above and in Chapter Two continue on their present course, what kind of situations can farm wives expect to confront in the future? This section contemplates what the future looks like for farm wives and their work on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick given the historical present. Specifically it draws attention to the ways farm

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[33] If children's labour is involved corporations and banks may be getting more than two for the price of one. It may be three, four or five for the price of one or two.

wives are likely to be differentially affected by future events if they live on: one, family farms or corporate family farms; and two, dairy or potato farms.

A. Facing the Future on Family Farms and Corporate Family Farms

Even though family farms in the province have persisted despite the government's efforts to eliminate them, they have felt and they continue to feel the pressure 'to get big or get out' of farming. For example, during my interview with Paige, she proclaimed:

> It drives me crazy when people say it's farmers' mismanagement that drove them out of business. Farmers have good management skills. It's really the system....The government is pushing farmers to get big. They think bigger is better. I don't know why they can't see the mistakes they're making. The government just doesn't realise how easily the ecosystem can be screwed up. And they keep giving incentives for bigger farmers rather than small ones like us. We haven't encouraged our children to farm. There just isn't any farm land to be had, so I don't see how they could make a living from it.

Betty said, "The government is forcing us to get bigger than we want to." Paige and Betty's perspective is certainly not shared by Danielle who told me:

> Cute farms can't make a living. You must be a business first. It should be that way all along. We want a fair return for our product. You can still make money farming but you must be big and farming must be your main concern. Our goal is to have more hired people so we can enjoy life more.

Posy went so far as to say:

> If you're in one position for ten years, you're moving backwards. You can't stand still if you are going to succeed in farming. You must enlarge to be a big success.

These latter two comments certainly reflect the position of government.

But even those who espouse farming as a business are going to find it harder to 'succeed' given where government agricultural policy is heading. Because it seems the New Brunswick government is no longer interested in 'family farms' — whether they be traditional family farms or corporate family farms — but in businesses pure and simple. I draw this conclusion because no longer does the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture and Rural Development discuss *farm* businesses, 'family farms' or make any mention of farmers in their mission statement, mandates or objectives (New Brunswick Department of Agriculture and Rural Development web site, February 1998). For example, they state their core business as:

> To increase the level of economic activity in the agri-food industry and promote entrepreneurship and economic growth in New Brunswick (New Brunswick Department of Agriculture and Rural Development web site, February 1998).

Among their defining principles they intend to:

> • Provide clients with the appropriate tools for growth, development and increased self-reliance. Such as information systems, access to capital, risk management, training, technology and technical expertise;
>
> • Maximize returns from the market; and
>
> • Create a healthy 'entrepreneurial environment' through the reduction of unnecessary regulations and other barriers to development (New Brunswick Department of Agriculture and Rural Development web site, February 1998).

Now, rather than promote 'family farms', they are promoting businesses; rather than dealing with farmers, they are dealing with 'clients'. Apparently there is no longer any need for confusion. The Department of Agriculture no longer needs to use the term 'family farm' to connote farm business. But it does seem suspect to drop the concept of farming altogether.

After all, it is hard to believe the state and agribusiness corporations want to put all farmers out of business. If they did the processing industries and corporations would have to do all the farming themselves and that would be much more costly than the current arrangement of buying the raw product from the farmer. McCains, for instance, has been very explicit about their dependence on potato farms:

> The farmers are not going broke, and we don't want them to go broke. If they go broke, McCain goes broke and vice versa (Harrison McCain as quoted in Branch, 1983: 11).

The problem is, the evidence indicates many farmers have gone broke. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 demonstrate as potato and dairy farms have capitalised, expanded and mechanised, they have also disappeared. This scenario is likely to continue.

However, if the government has its way, it will be the corporate family farms who survive and thrive. Corporate family farms certainly have the advantage over family farms in terms of the current direction of agricultural policy and the Department of Agriculture's activities. First of all, they have embraced the government's agenda. But the persistence of more than one farming strategy among farm families indicates there are those people who have resisted the government's agenda. Whether or not they will continue to be able to do so is less clear. Farm wives on the farms which have resisted the 'get big or get out' strategy are certainly facing more of a struggle if they plan to stay in farming.

Yet family farms do have one advantage in that they tend to be more self-sufficient, diversified operations. Frequently mixed operations require wives to commit a lot of

time and energy to farm work. Nevertheless, mixed farms can juggle market fluctuations in a way which specialised farms can not. In fact, the more specialised farm operations become, the more difficult it is for farm families to shift their strategies and direction when the industry or markets experience upheaval. "A family can't live on potatoes alone", Priscilla reasoned. In effect, the corporate family farm's dependence on a cash income to purchase the family's foodstuffs places it in a much more vulnerable position than the family farm which produces much of their own foodstuffs themselves. A reliance on strong markets can cause financial hardship, rising debt or even bankrupty during an economic downturn. If the farm fails, the family loses both its source of income and its home.[34] Even though corporate family farms are organising their affairs so as to divide the family sphere and farm enterprise as much as possible, their family farm households are not immune to the rising costs of production and low commodity prices. For example, Danielle confided, "Our costs and income don't coincide as well as I would like since we expanded." In fact, corporate family farms tend to feel the cost-price squeeze even harder than family farms do because they must add labour costs to production.

All family owned and operated farms are coping with uncertain futures. This is evident in that wives on both family farms and corporate family farms, in both dairy and potato production, are undecided as to whether or not they want their children to farm. In some ways, family farms may be better equipped to deal with market fluctuations than corporate family farms because they are more self-sufficient which gives them a certain level of flexibility. On the other hand, corporate family farms are most apt to benefit from government incentives, policies and programs more so than family farms because they best represent the Department of Agriculture's profile of their future 'clients'. For farm wives on family farms and farm wives on corporate family farms facing the future means contending with highly contrasting motivations for farming. While the corporate family farms seem to be winning, they certainly haven't won. Family farms are still firmly rooted in the province. If the battle succeeds in eliminating even more farmers, the province's population will surely be the losers since our declining capacity to feed ourselves makes us more and more dependent on increasingly volatile world markets.

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[34] This position, of course, is based on the assumption that the family's primary source of income is the family farm enterprise. It does not take into account the 'part-time' farmer who has another source of income nor the cash generating activities of farm wives which are not farm related — which are becoming more and more a feature of family farming.

B. Facing the Future on Dairy Farms and Potato Farms

As we saw in Chapter Five, dairy and potato farming have been organised very differently in New Brunswick. Dairy farms have operated in a closed market while potato farm operate within an open competitive market. Dairy farms have an assured buyer for the amount they agreed to produce but for the most part potato farms do not. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATT) may change all that since Canadian marketing boards are under constant attack. Closed markets are considered unfair trade arrangements under 'free trade' as they supposedly impede economic growth and capitalist development. This situation has many dairy farms in the province concerned about their future. As Deirdre revealed:

> It is not in our plans to expand right now. The only thing which might dictate an expansion is if we lose the quota system due to NAFTA and free trade. If that happens, the small fella can't survive. It'll mean get big or get out. And I am not sure what we would do at that point. If we were to expand the dairy, our beef herd would have to decrease in order to put more time and work into the dairy. There's a lot of market uncertainty right now.

In fact, three-quarters of the wives on dairy farms talked about the uncertainties their commodity sector faced when I asked them where they saw themselves and their farms in ten years time. Most of these women did not know since whether or not they will continue to farm, expand the operation or move elsewhere depends on how their quota and marketing system fairs under these changing trade agreements.

If the quota system is dismantled, dairy farms will face the same economic uncertainties potato farms presently face. Rather than rely on a marketing board, they will have to directly search out markets, establish to whom and when to sell their milk and cream and deal with consumer and market price fluctuations. Farmers and farm wives on dairy farms will lose their steady farm income which will have consequences for the ways in which wives organise household finances and purchases. No doubt the loss of a steady income would produce similar work situations and scenarios for wives on dairy farms as women on potato farms report. Coinciding with a more irregular pay cheque, there would likely be a rise in wives' involvement in cash generating activities since this is one way wives on potato farms have coped with economic uncertainty.

Meanwhile the situation for wives on potato farms — and if marketing boards are eliminated this will become a more acute problem for wives on dairy farms — is likely to get worse given the cost-price squeeze. Both dairy and potato farmers' wives — on family farms and corporate family farms — identified the cost-price squeeze as a

stressful reality they face as producers. For example, Daphne, who lives on a family farm, told me:

> There's a lot more stress than there used to be. There has been an increase in the cost of feed and machinery. It's hard keeping up with quota demands because we are penalised for under production and not paid for over production. Sometimes I think there must be an easier way to make a living.

In comparison Dayle, who lives on a corporate family farm, argued:

> We would still like to expand but we are worried about the quota system and whether or not it will continue to stay in place. So we have decided the most important thing for us is to bring our debt load down. The trouble is our production prices keep going up but not the price of milk!

Paige and Patricia present similar scenarios in potato farming. Paige revealed:

> Our input costs have been skyrocketing. But our output costs haven't been matching them. It would be good if our prices [for potatoes] were stable — at or above cost would be wonderful. It really isn't a positive situation. We can do with the uncertainty of the weather but the uncertainty of the markets is more frightening.

Paige's remarks suggest she is interested in 'breaking even', which is not surprising since she is on a family farm which is quite self-sufficient. In contrast, Patricia's farm is an incorporated business, even though they still operate from one bank account, and she is concerned with profit margins:

> Our costs keep going up so no matter what we do our profits stay the same. The price of fertiliser, sprays and machinery just won't come down even though the prices we get for our potatoes haven't been increasing. Our profits are going to go down if the price for potatoes doesn't increase.

This economic reality of rising costs but virtually unchanged commodity prices for both sectors places a great deal of stress on the farm family as they struggle to survive in this economic climate. According to Ghorayshi:

> When the family farm faces adversity, family members use a number of strategies to reduce risk. They may cut personal consumption, intensify subsistence and/or seek off farm work — doing whatever they can to retain ownership. Expenditure decisions on the farm are a constant source of tension. Choices must be made between expenditure on personal and household needs and investment in the means of production for the enterprise. The viability of the farm often requires deferment of consumption wants. Household members are continually expected to make the necessary sacrifices (Ghorayshi, 1989: 573).

As we saw in Chapters Four and Five farm wives do cut personal costs, they do increase their household labour and food production for household consumption, and they do become involved in cash generating activities in order to keep their families in farming. Farm wives are likely going to have to do more of this cost-cutting work if

the government and industry expect farm families to continue to operate within a tighter economic environment.

For the time being the farms in my study have weathered the cost-price squeeze. Often by putting the farm first. For example, farm wives repeatedly told me farm expenditures take priority over household expenditures. Women resoundingly argued if a decision had to be made between a farm purchase and a household purchase, the farm would come first. Just the same, as Phyllis points out, the farm operation and family household are co-existing:

> In terms of improvements, the farm would take priority over the house. But the house and the farm are both working at the same time... You can't totally ignore one or the other.

In fact, balancing the demands of family and farm has led many farm wives into a job they did not necessarily bargain for when they married their farm husbands.

In combining these two spheres — family and work — family farming is able to get "two workers for the price of one" (Finch, 1983). As a result, the web of relationships in which farm wives find themselves is far more extensive than those with their husbands. It is not just husbands who appropriate women's labour (Smith, 1979; Delpy and Leonard, 1985, 1992) but the state and agribusiness as well since it is these latter two groups who are able to reap the benefits of the farm family's labour. The state is able to maintain its cheap food policy and food processors are able to obtain cheap raw materials for their processing industries. This position is also articulated by some farm wives, for example, Danielle informed me:

> Farmers and their families give up a lot so consumers can get food for cheap prices. We give up enough. People should stop treating us like we don't know anything.

But the pressure continues to be placed on farm families and farm wives to be more cost-efficient by reducing costs and bringing in extra capital through pluriactivity and 'off farm' work so they and their families will continue to farm when commodity prices remain unchanged but input costs increase.

Ghorayshi (1989:581) argued under these circumstances "working for the farm may require working off the farm". While Gasson warned the cost-price squeeze could increase multiple job holding among farm families:

> A hardening of the cost-price squeeze...could result in a growth of multiple job holding among farm families. Women farmers and working farmwives might well respond by developing lucrative farm-based enterprises or by releasing husbands for off-farm employment. Farm housewives, unaccustomed to regular farm work, might contribute

> more by taking off-farm jobs themselves. Relevant considerations here include the marketable skills of spouses, jobs available and transport (Gasson, 1981: 19).

However, 'off farm employment' may not be a practical solution in a shrinking farm community. The closure of rural schools, hospitals and banks occurring throughout New Brunswick in this era of government cutbacks and corporate downsizing represent fewer employment opportunities for farm wives in the communities where they live. They are either forced to travel farther for work, to set up their own businesses or to invest their labour on the farm. In my study, farm wives on dairy and potato farms have chosen all of these options.

In the end, neither dairy or potato farms nor the farm wives living on them are immune to the broader social, economic and political changes occurring around them. How they respond depends upon their motivation for farming, their previous actions and how they gage the current situation. Some farm wives are optimistic about the future and their ability to adapt to the situations they confront. Others are not. Whatever their strategy or disposition, it seems to me in the present climate, they will find themselves working harder and harder to stay in farming.

IV. Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the changing social, economic and political environment farm wives are dealing with in New Brunswick, Canada. In this chapter we saw, in addition to the way 'family' farming is organised, farm wives' work activities and patterns are affected by the changing farm community. The opportunities and constraints farm wives face today have a different character than the ones they confronted in the past — or are likely to contend with in the future. However, there is certainly evidence of historical processes and precedents within the farm community which hint at what is coming to prevail.

From this chapter it is obvious some of the diversity in farm wives' work is a consequence of the changing farm community. Besides varying production processes witnessed in Chapter Five, the diverse work activities and patterns of work among farm wives within a commodity sector is a result of different class positions and socio-personal backgrounds. These same features — class positions and socio-personal backgrounds — can act to unite farm wives producing very different commodities. In essence, farm wives on family farms producing potatoes are engaged in different work than farm wives on corporate family farms. The same applies to farm wives on dairy farms. The varying class positions within a commodity sector effectively divide farm wives even though their farms are producing the same commodity. Meanwhile farm

wives producing different commodities — with highly contrasting social and economic structures such as dairy and potato farming in New Brunswick — have much in common because they share the same class position. Wives' socio-personal backgrounds can serve the same function. As a result, variations in farm wives' work within a commodity sector can transpose into similarities across commodity sectors. This is undoubtedly one reason why commodity has tended to be ignored by those studying farm wives' work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CASE STUDY CONCLUSIONS

Before women scholars pointed out the differences in men and women's lived experiences on family farms, rural sociologists assumed the experiences of men could be equated with the whole farm family. As such, they treated the farm enterprise as the unit of analysis and discussed structural changes in agriculture and issues surrounding family farming as though they affected all family members equally. However, feminist research on family households and internal relations of production pointed to the many differences in men and women's lived experiences on family farms. This research has produced a better understanding of the gendered nature of work on family farms and the inequities women face in terms of power, decision-making and inheritance on family owned and operated enterprises. But it has overarchingly presumed the 'family' in family farming is a 'traditional' nuclear family. Consequently, studies have proceeded on the belief it is within nuclear family farm enterprises which farm wives are doing their work, when in fact many are living and working on intergenerational and intragenerational family farms. In effect, the farms wives live on are as diverse as the women themselves.

As we saw in Chapter Four, 'family' farming involves families in farming which means multiple and varied relationships can ensue between immediate and extended family members. Secondly, as Chapter Five illustrated, farming involves the production of many diverse foodstuffs which all have their own land, labour, and capital requirements for getting the job done. Thirdly, Chapter Six demonstrated, family farms have changed over the years and so have the communities they are located in. The farm community is experiencing changes on many levels because neither the world nor people's lives are standing still.

This case study has demonstrated the fallacy of viewing farming as an homogeneous activity. While the case study has focused on two highly contrasting farming industries — animal husbandry versus a field crop, a closed market versus an open market, a daily work schedule versus a seasonal work schedule — it does highlight the need for more careful discussions of what farm work women are doing

and why they are doing such work. The farm's commodity is a substantially different variable than the size of operation, technology employed and labour practices. A farm's commodity establishes 'the job to be done' while these other features determine 'how the job gets done'. How the job gets done can differ from one farm to another and it can change on individual family farms but what the farm sets out to do establishes what needs to be done. In this case study we have examined the differing impact milking cows or growing potatoes has on farm wives' work.

We have learned most rural sociologists, agricultural economists and those studying farm women's work have completely bypassed a discussion of the work which needs to be done on a particular kind of farm[1] in favour of an examination of how the work actually gets done. Unfortunately, their discussions of how the job gets done reduces family farms and their farming practices to a universal set of features — namely size of operation, levels of mechanisation and labour practices. Variations in farm women's work are then attributed to variations in these features rather than variations in the job to be done and the specific work processes, technologies and social relations of production each family farm enterprise adopts to produce their particular commodity.

In the end, living and working on a farm effectively means living in an environment shaped by the pace and demands of the farm's commodity production as much as by the family structure or the changing farm community. Dairy farmers are not producing the same product as potato farmers. As a result, they are not engaged in the same activities nor do they work the same hours. Given the differences in work activities and the timing of work on dairy and potato farms — cows are milked every day while only one potato crop is planted and harvested each year — this finding is not extraordinary. What is startling is how the existence of different job requirements and the subsequent work rhythms attached to the production of a particular commodity has been completely overlooked as a factor affecting farm women's work.

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[1] True, some family farms do change their farm's main commercial enterprise. In fact, some of the farms in my study reported switching their farm's commodity production. But as Daphne said, "switching from hogs to dairy was a big decision". As farms become more and more specialised it is exceedingly difficult to move in and out of commodity sectors because the equipment required can not be easily adapted to different farm commodities. A milking parlour is useless on a potato farm. A potato harvester can not be used to milk the cows. These technologies are very specialised because they are designed for a particular purpose. The scale of capital invested in them makes it virtually impossible to switch production paths once the decision has been made to go one route rather than another.

Researchers have generally failed to recognise farmers producing different foodstuffs have substantially different jobs, which is why they have not taken this into account when doing research on farm women's work. This case study has demonstrated differences in the way dairy and potato farmers are paid for their work as well as the variations in when particular farming activities need to be done do indeed have differential impacts on farm wives' work patterns and activities. The job the farmer and his family have set out to do effectively establishes the conditions under which farm wives must organise their work and family life, what they will be called on to do and when they will be called on to do it. It is the farm's commodity production which ultimately structures a farm wife's life, her standard of living, how hard she will have to work and the rhythms and patterns of her life. Farm wives' lives will vary as a consequence of their farm's commodity production requirements and the socio-economic conditions attached to their commodity sector.

Overall the literature on farm women and their work has been preoccupied with how women contribute to agricultural production or how wives contribute to family farms rather than how agricultural production and family farming contributes to farm wives' work. Consequently, researchers studying farm wives' work have generally failed to recognise how these aspects of a farmer's job, i.e. a husband's work, structure his farm wife's life and work. Even Delpy and Leonard (1992: 228-246), who do consider both questions when examining farm women's work, ask Finch's second question — how wives contribute to their husbands' work — first ; and Finch's first question — how a husband's job structures his wife's life — second. Since most rural sociologists and those studying farm women's work do this, and they unearth enough material to write a book, article or thesis they end up skipping or overlooking Finch's first question entirely — i.e. how are farm wives' incorporated into their farmer husbands' work?

By reversing the question, this research project was able to examine the similarities and differences in farm wives' work on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. In so doing, it has illustrated how farm wives are 'incorporated' into their farmer husbands' work: in terms of space, time and work activities. As well, it has been able to document the effect a farm's commodity production has on farm wives' work. The case study has demonstrated farm commodity sectors have been organised differently and these different ways of organising production have an impact on farm wives' work. In the end, farm production and farm men's work vary from one commodity sector to the next, so it is hardly surprising to find farm wives' work does as well. But there are also differences

within commodity sectors from one family farm to the next — in terms of scales of production, levels of mechanisation and social relations of production — which also affect farm wives' work.

While many have recognised the 'family' farm has traditionally combined — both socially and geographically — the family household and farm enterprise, they have not realised the efforts some farm families have made to separate the two. This overarching concern with 'Where does the private realm of the family and the public realm of work begin and end?' has not led researchers to systematically examine the consequences of being attached to the 'family' farm as a farm wife. They have failed to ask: What does it mean to be a *wife* on the family farm?

Finch (1983) argues many professions implicitly hire the professional's wife at the same time they hire the 'professional'. For example, she maintains ministers' wives, military men's wives and politician's wives are *'married to the job'* — a job they do not apply for and are not paid to do! While farmers are self-employed rather than hired professionals, it seems they too are "hiring" a life-time partner and worker for the farm when they get married. It is through marriage that a farm wife becomes directly or indirectly involved in the success or failure of the farm enterprise. By virtue of being a wife her contributions to the family farm enterprise are elicited. Farm wives provide back-up services, do peripheral work and act as additional workers for their husbands' farm enterprises. Their extended household labour subsidises the farm unit by reducing the cash needs of the family. Their work in farm production and farm management means more can be produced for market or family consumption without extra labour costs. Consequently, women who marry farmers, do not just marry the farmer, they marry the farm. Since the family farm is a form of household production which uses family labour, if the farm enterprise fails the family household loses its economic base and economic security. Everything that has been invested in the farm enterprise and all the sacrifices made in the family household will be lost if the family farm goes bankrupt or ceases operation. As many others have pointed out, if the farm succeeds a farm wife has a home and an income, if it fails she has neither.

How farm wives and their families respond to the changing farm community depends on the opportunities and constraints they see themselves facing now and in the future. Their vast range of responses to the changing farm community has resulted in diverse farm operations, diverse family compositions on 'family' farms, and diverse work situations for farmers and their wives. Precisely because farm wives are living and working in communities which are constantly experiencing economic, social,

political and cultural changes — and they have different responses to these changes — we can find some farm wife somewhere doing every possible work activity and task there is to be done on the farm, in the household, and in the community — in terms of both paid and unpaid work. What needs to be better appreciated is the way farm wives' lives and work are shaped and influenced by their relationships to their families, their farms and their changing farm communities. Farm wives' work needs to be understood as part of a much larger historical process.

Farm wives on dairy farms must contend with different daily and seasonal work schedules than wives on potato farms. Differences in when and how they get paid for their farm product also affects the running and managing of the family household. Dairy farms get paid on a biweekly basis. Potato farms are paid in lump sums depending upon when the crop is sold. These payment schemes provide financial stability for families in dairy farming and economic instability for families in potato farming. Not surprising perhaps, more women on potato farms are found to be engaged in cash generating activities than those on dairy farms. While variations are to be found between commodity sectors, differences within a commodity sector can also transpose into similarities between commodity sectors because all farm families are contending with agricultural restructuring, the cost-price squeeze, as well as economic and political uncertainties.

The case study results challenge the existing literature which argues wives are just helpers. Farm wives' help is not random or inconsequential. Women are called upon year after year to 'help' with the same tasks and they organise their work schedules to accommodate their husbands' work (i.e. the needs of the family farm). Take the case of Barbara, who organises her voluntary activities for the 'quiet' winter months — and her husband's dislike of her leisure activities. Her community work makes her unavailable to 'help' with farming on a moment's notice which in turn has potential to create conflict since she is expected to be there. Betty, on the other hand, was unwilling or unable to extract herself from farm activities. She argued other women who were not farmers' wives could not understand her need to organise activities around the farm schedule and this had made it impossible for her to be active in community activities. In effect, being 'a helper' is their job. It is one of the ways farm wives are incorporated into their husbands' farm work.

Efforts to understand farm wives' work have not fully appreciated how farming contributes to and structures their lives. This is partly a consequence of analysing family issues and farm issues separately. An example of what happens when this

approach is taken is Ruth Gasson's (1980) typology of farm women — which has been embraced by many. Gasson argues farm wives can generally be found engaged in one of three roles, they can be: 'farm women operators' who are farmers in their own right or partners in the business operation; 'working farm wives' by combining farming with family responsibilities; or 'farm housewives' if they place primacy on the family household. Whether or not they are more closely tied to the farm or to the family establishes their most visible work and their identity[2]. It is the category of helper which is most challenged by the case study results since farm wives' "help" is consistent from year to year. Because Gasson emphasises wives' participation in farm work she fails to appreciate the multiple ways farm wives are incorporated into the farm operation.

Most often differences in farm wives' work roles and activities have been understood to be the result of socio-personal differences, differences in universal farm characteristics such as scales of operation, labour requirements and structural changes in agriculture. While some similarities may exist in 'farmers' work' as a result of social relations of production, the scale of production and the use of technologies, they are not engaged in the same activities. True they are all producing agricultural products, but this is akin to saying all workers work. Just as commodity has not been seen to be a major contributor to farm wives' work, it has not been seen to distinguish male farmers and their work.

In the end, commodity is just another way of talking about how a husband's work shapes and influences his wife's work. This case study has demonstrated a husband's work and leisure shapes and influences his wife's life and work. A dairy farmer has different work than a potato farmer. The assumption has been that farm wives all have the same 'job description' because they are married to farmers. They do not. The real error, however, has been believing that all farmers have the same jobs.

'Commodity' is the dimension or characteristic which distinguishes one group of farmers from another — it's the short hand for what the farmer's job or work entails. Rural sociologists have been too concerned with social relations of production — and agricultural economists with scales of production, levels of mechanisation and whether or not farms are capital or labour intensive — to systematically explore how

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[2] But as Bella (1992) would argue this work is only the most visible work, it is the most tangible and easily measured. It does not mean it is the only work women do on family farms and it doesn't necessarily mean it is the most valuable either.

commodity production is organised and how this organisation affects farmers' work lives. In the end, we can't say 'dairy' farms equal this and 'potato' farms equal that because the particular conditions under which these commodities are produced will vary from place to place and even from one time period to the next. However, the case study has demonstrated a farm's commodity does affect farm wives' work but to understand how we need to look at the broader social relations in which their work is embedded.

Future research must consider not only how women contribute to family farming but how family farming contributes to women's work because of the way it is organised. It is important to consider how things are organised, the situations a particular way of organising things creates, how people respond; the history of this organisation and people's responses; and how people might respond in the future given the past and present. Only then will we begin to appreciate the similarities and differences in farm wives' work on family owned and operated farm enterprises.

Part Three:

Implications of the New Brunswick Case Study for Studying Farm Women's Work

Propelled by the growth of the women's movement, the 1970s witnessed the rise of feminism in academia. From the beginning the question of women's work and its largely unrecognised place in the economy was a matter of intense concern and debate. The debate succeeded in bringing women's unpaid domestic labour to the forefront of public attention. Even though it was carried out in the family household, often for no pay, women's domestic labour was finally understood and recognised as an important part of the economy. True, unpaid domestic labour may not be counted in official economic statistics but it keeps the economy working smoothly by servicing workers and reproducing the labour force. It also meant women could act as a 'reserve army of labour' for capital by leaving their homes and going to work in times of crisis such as during wars or in the event of labour shortages. These insights lead researchers to study women's multiple and varied work activities — both paid and unpaid — in an effort to document their contributions — as well as the changing form those contributions took — to the family, economy and society.

The result was an extensive amount of research on: women's participation in the labour force, including barriers to participation; the economic value of domestic labour; and the interplay between the public world of work and the private realm of the family. This last research interest has produced a number of studies examining the ways in which a husband's work both structures his wife's life and elicits her support (Kanter, 1977; Luxton, 1980; Berteaux and Berteaux-Wiame, 1981; Finch, 1983; Ardner, 1984; Tremayne, 1984; Delphy and Leonard, 1985 and 1994; Stacey, 1986)[1].

At the same time this research was emerging, in Canada the situation of farm women came to public attention as a result of Irene Murdoch's lost court case. Her court case gained media attention just as 'family' farming was entering a crisis due to banks foreclosing on farm loans. Farm families in Canada were 'going out of business' and rural infrastructures were collapsing as a consequence of agricultural

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[1] Because 'family' farms combine the public and private spheres in household based production, it is this final research area which is the most relevant for studying farm women and their work.

restructuring. Concomitantly, women's participation and role in agricultural production was gaining recognition around the world (Gasson, 1980; Sachs, 1983; Rosenfeld, 1985; Ross, 1985). All of these events and concerns culminated to place farm women on the research agenda.

Since very little was known about farm women and their work, researchers set out to document what exactly women were doing. As we said in Chapter Three, this research produced a number of very descriptive studies. Additionally it resulted in a number of commentaries on what we did and didn't know about farm women and their work, thereby establishing future research agendas. Armed with descriptions of what farm women were doing, the next task was to make sense of what farm women were doing. This stage required researchers to develop theoretical models which would account for and make sense of the multiple and varied work activities farm women undertake. At this point researchers began to categorise farm women's work according to the spatial location it occurred in — i.e. on farm, off farm, domestic and community work; and they began to debate whether or not women's contributions to agriculture were direct or indirect, paid or unpaid, productive or reproductive in nature.

These researchers were, in effect, drawing on and utilising all the theoretical debates available to them in their efforts to explain farm women's multifarious work. However, on the whole, those studying farm women's work have not been fully cognisant of the wide ranging theoretical perspectives at play in the literature. Rather than seeing and clarifying differences in their theoretical perspectives, researchers have tended to identify themselves as feminists. They have emphasised the ways in which they, as feminist academics and researchers, are alike rather than address the ways in which they differ. Unfortunately, this approach has spilled into their research agenda as well.

'Farm women' has become the term blanketedly applied to wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts and grandmothers irrespective of whether or not they are incorporated into men's jobs, farm labourers or farm owners and operators. Moreover, these diverse women with diverse circumstances are presumed to be dealing with the 'same' issues and concerns because they live or work on family owned and operated farms. Part Two has demonstrated this is clearly not the case.[2] But rather than embrace diversity and difference — two dominant themes in

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[2] In recent years some researchers have tried to redress this problem by studying women engaged in agricultural production who have historically been ignored, such as farm labourers (Wall, 1994) and female farm operators (Leckie,1993).

sociological research throughout this decade — the literature on farm women has treated them as an homogeneous group.

By focusing on their common trait — i.e. they are all women — the literature has failed to consider the impact diverse relationships and attachments to 'family' farming have on farm women's lives and work. Portraying 'family' farms as nuclear family operations means they have also missed the implications diverse family structures have for farm women's lives and work. Viewing 'farming' as a uniform set of work tasks overlooks the different jobs to be done in favour of the different ways for getting the job done. Failing to appreciate 'family farming' has taken more than one form as farm families resist and embrace change means important differences between farm women and the family farms they live on go unnoticed.

The case study presented in Part Two highlights again and again the different situations farm wives face because they live and work on diverse family farms. It also documents their varied responses to their changing 'family' farms and changing farm communities. Farm wives' work is not uniform. Their work is as varied as the women and the family farms they live on. What, if any, general insights can be gleaned from this case study and these women's lives for future research on farm women's work? This is the question taken up in Part Three.

Obviously this requires — at least implicitly — a critique of the broader literature on women and work since farm women's work is embedded in this larger literature. In fact, Rickson (1997:91) argues the study of women's work in agriculture provides a testing ground for almost all the feminist and sociological debates of the past two decades. Unfortunately many have sought to question and test broader sociological and feminist debates and theory on farm women rather than to question or test how useful the basic concepts applied to farm women and their work really are. It is this latter exercise which is taken up in Part Three. Overall, Part Three considers how effective our theoretical paradigms have been for understanding farm women's work given the lived realities of the farm wives presented in the New Brunswick case study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THEORISING FARM WOMEN'S WORK

The rise of feminism and the subsequent interest in women's work eventually combined with a growing concern over the fate of 'family' farming to produce a considerable literature on farm women. In Canada, the overarching theme of this literature has been farm women's work. This theme has produced a series of studies on women's multiple and varied contributions to agriculture as well as ongoing discussions of the obstacles and opportunities farm women face.

This burgeoning literature has managed to highlight and thereby make more visible women's participation in farm production. As we have seen, it has prompted tax reform and changes in the matrimonial property acts in Canada. It has encouraged 'farm women' to recognise their contributions to farming and to become more politically active. In effect, this literature has sought to understand and improve the lives of farm women. But have we built suitable tools for the task at hand? Do our theoretical models and categories enable us as researchers to explore and adequately report on the diverse working lives and situations of farm women? Are our current theoretical models appropriate for observing, understanding, explaining and predicting farm women's work lives? Or do they provide ways of 'not seeing'?

This chapter considers the limitations and constraints the theoretical dualisms usually applied to farm women and their work have had on our thinking and analysis of farm women's work. It goes on to argue the spatial categories of domestic, on farm, off farm and community work currently used to describe, document and explain farm women's work essentially mask over and conceal the diverse and different approaches farm women have had towards their work in each of these spheres. It begins the task of delineating the complexities hitherto ignored and glossed over from using ill defined categories. The categories themselves are 'black boxes' or 'pandora's boxes' since they have been used to avoid the complex and messy reality farm women's work poses. The chapter concludes by arguing if we are to better understand farm women's work we need to challenge the analytic categories which have come to shape our thinking, data collection and final analysis.

I. The Theoretical Dualisms

Studies of women's work have adopted a language which effectively sets women's work apart from men's work.[1] Men's work has traditionally been identified as productive while women's work has been identified as reproductive. Men usually work for pay. Women usually work for no pay making them volunteers or unpaid labourers. Men's work occurs in the public sphere. Women's work occurs in the private sphere. Men work in the formal economy. Women work in the nonformal or informal economy[2]. Of course, there are exceptions within each of these categories — some men work at home for no pay while many women work in the formal economy for pay. Both genders find work in the formal, nonformal and informal economies.

However the fact remains, regardless of what theoretical tradition is utilised, women's work tends to be defined by men's work. That is to say, men's work has historically established what women's work is or isn't. Because men's experiences set the standards and establish the basis for discussing women's work, women effectively become "the other" — they're presented in a framework which is diametrically opposite to the one presented for men. What is more this framework has emerged from studying the differences in men's and women's work in an urban setting where there has been a more clearly defined 'public' and 'private' sphere. In other words, these dualisms which have permeated our thinking on women and work are the result of researchers' efforts to identify, define and categorise urban women's work in relation to men's work.

Unfortunately, researchers studying farm women have not been able to extract themselves from the theoretical dualisms to be found in studies of urban working women — where at least in theory the family household and the world of work are two separate spheres.[3] While it is unclear how accurate or useful this division is for

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[1] This would appear to be an unintended rather than an intended consequence of organising our theoretical debates around opposing concepts.

[2] McKinley Wright (1995: 217) defines formal and informal sectors as follows: "The formal sector provides legally regulated wages and working conditions for labor and contractual relationships between labor and capital. The informal sector is structurally heterogeneous and comprises such activities as direct subsistence, small-scale production and trade, and subcontracting to semi-clandestine enterprises and homeworkers. Informal sector work includes home-based work but not unpaid work — such as household domestic labor. Household work obviously takes place in the household." This final point may not be true since grocery shopping for the household does not take place there nor does doing laundry at a launderette, yet these would clearly qualify as components of unpaid household labour.

[3] Of course, the work of Kanter (1977) and Finch (1983), the collection by Callan and Ardner (1984) and Adkins (1995) illustrate the fallacy of this premise when they look at how wives get drawn into

describing women's work in other situations it seems quite inadequate for farm women. First and foremost, the world of work versus the realm of the family represents a false dichotomy for 'family' farms. Family farms combine family labour in household based production which means the farm enterprise and the family household are not easily separated — even on corporate family farms which aim to establish and maintain separations between the public world of work and the private realm of the family. Secondly, these dualistic concepts promote a spatial division of work so farm women's work frequently gets divided into off farm, on farm, household and community work; which as we will explore in the next section are themselves theoretically loaded categories.

At this point, it is enough to realise, dividing farm women's work into these spatial locations implicitly accepts the dichotomy of productive (wage) and reproductive (domestic) labour to classify and interpret their multifaceted work activities. Yet, studies of farm women's work have repeatedly argued paid and unpaid, productive and reproductive are inadequate for explaining their multifarious work in the family farm enterprise. Despite this criticism, researchers continue to portray farm women as directly or indirectly supporting the family farm enterprise through paid and unpaid labour[4]. The continued emphasis on dividing work according to whether or not it is paid or unpaid, productive or reproductive is reminiscent of those who distinguished between the formal world of work and the informal world of the family household.

Despite the persistent realisation and acknowledgement such distinctions are inappropriate or inadequate, researchers studying farm women's work slip into maintaining the theoretical *status quo* even though the distinction is a belaboured one. The work by feminist authors to prove women's reproductive work is every bit as much work as work in a factory or office, and every bit as important for the production and reproduction of the family farm and society itself, has not produced theoretical models which transcend these dualisms. Women's work continues to be cast into dualistic categories which serves to perpetuate these dichotomies despite them having been theoretically cast into doubt. McKinley-Wright (1995: 217) also makes this point:

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their husbands' jobs, thereby enabling the corporation or company to gain 'two workers for the price of one'.

[4] While there is a great deal of debate over what should and does constitute productive and reproductive, direct and indirect support, few disagreements have arisen over paid and unpaid labour — though the form of payment may vary (Whatmore, 1991; Gasson and Errington, 1993); as well we need to note the work women do for pay or as volunteers may also vary.

> Social scientists in the 20th century, studying the family and women's roles, still base much of their work on this underlying ideology of dichotomous spheres without questioning its appropriateness or empirical validity; however, feminist researchers have noted the ideological basis of the separate spheres division of the world with its limited definition of work as waged work and have demonstrated that neither historical nor cross-cultural empirical evidence supports a dichotomous model. Furthermore, they have shown that a dichotomous model makes much of women's work invisible or valueless.

Despite demonstrating their limitations again and again, we continue to use these dualistic concepts and antonyms in our discussions of farm women and their work.

The case study results presented in Part Two lead me to believe labour on the family farm — whether it be a traditional family farm or a corporate family farm — does not easily lend itself to the analytic bifurcation conveyed by our theoretical models. First of all, women's work is far more fluid than our theoretical dualisms suggest. As innumerable studies acknowledge, farm women do many things at once so how do we classify and account for the way they spend their time? Is it productive or reproductive when they are milking cows with children in tow? When they get paid for one task and not the other? When they are knitting mittens and talking on the phone to a friend at the same time are they engaged in leisure, reproductive labour or are they intensifying household production to reduce the cash demands on the farm? If it reduces the cash expenditure of the family farm operation does women's cash generating work, knitting, sewing, food production and preservation constitute a direct or indirect contribution to the family farm enterprise? If women are working in farm production for no pay are they making more of a contribution to the farm enterprise than those women who are working in farm production for pay? All of these questions continue to be answered differently by different authors and they all relate to how we do or do not count women's labour and their contributions to the family farm enterprise.

Historically some people's work has been valued more than other people's work. Work which occurs in the formal economy has been counted while work in the nonformal and informal economies have not. When laundry, cooking and cleaning up for hired workers remains unpaid and flows into the same work activities for family members, it has often not been observed to be part of farm production costs. Likewise, cleaning and disinfecting coveralls and gloves on a daily basis through the spring and fall to maintain a farm's certification status has failed to be identified as part of the farm's production process. Precisely because this kind of labour occurs within the family household and the labour requirements of the farm production process are ill understood, it is perceived to be housework like any other kind of housework and laundry like any other laundry. Herein lies the theoretical problem for researchers studying farm women's work: what is or isn't farm work? Where do farm tasks begin

and end? Where do family responsibilities begin and end? To be deemed farm work does the activity need to occur in the barn or in the fields? In answer to this last question, it doesn't appear that farm work needs to occur outside the walls of the family household — at least not if it is management or bookkeeping work. However, the same principle does not seem to be applied to farm related work which has a domestic hue. Why exactly remains elusive.

Women who do not have adequate household incomes from the farm, or their own cash generating activities to supplement the family's income from the farm, frequently intensify their household labour to produce most of their family's foodstuffs. Regardless of the cash available, women spend a great deal of time shopping for bargains in order to stretch the family budget. This latter work by farm women tends to be ignored completely while the former falls through the cracks of productive labour into the 'reproductive' sphere because it is not part of the formal economy and women generally do not get paid to do it. Unfortunately, our theoretical models leave us little room to understand the importance of farm wives' work in the household where they attempt to cut costs by: knitting, sewing and darning the family's clothing, making their own bread, picking wild strawberries because 'they are free', keeping chickens and selling eggs, growing large vegetable gardens, canning and freezing products which other families buy.

Given that productive labour has by and large been equated with paid labour, how do we classify work activities that produce end products (e.g. a pair of mittens) but are not performed for a wage or do not get sold in the market and therefore have no 'exchange value'? Generally this work is said to have a use-value but not an exchange value. Rather than be considered part of the public domain of work, it tends to be classified as part of the private sphere of reproduction or another example of a 'labour of love' — yet this labour reduces the financial resources the farm enterprise has to return to the family household. Besides, goods and services which are 'homemade' have only had to incur the initial input costs. It is often women's labour which has 'transformed' these inputs into a use-able product. If 'finished' products were bought they would generally cost more. For example, compare the cost and labour time of buying seed and fertilizer in order to grow and preserve all your own food to buying frozen dinners and popping them in the microwave. Yet, studies of farm women's work usually equate these two activities classifying them both as 'reproductive' labour.

Since we have such difficulties determining the value of tangible products that have not been bought and sold in the market place, it is hardly surprising that we completely overlook or ignore the intangible 'emotional' work farm women carry out as part of their everyday lives. It is after all often women who, as wives and mothers, are called on to smooth over family tensions. It is often women who supply the family with emotional support and who provide emotional cohesion among nuclear and extended family members. They keep the peace. They act as sounding boards, provide listening ears, sound counsel and good advice so family members can continue to work together through conflict, financial strain and increasing external pressures. As Bella (1992) notes, this labour is even harder to measure than how many meals were cooked, loads of laundry were done, mittens were made or diapers changed. It is never paid. If the farm enterprise depends on it to succeed and function, is it a direct or indirect contribution to the 'family' farm? How can we even begin to measure the import of such labour with our current theoretical paradigms?

There is little prospect of doing so especially since there is little agreement over whether or not women's more tangible contributions to the farm enterprise — whether it be going for broken machinery parts, cutting potato into seed, helping with the harvest picking potatoes, milking cows, feeding haying crews and doing the farm book-keeping — are direct or indirect contributions. Sometimes women are paid, sometimes they are not paid for this work. Once again, we are left struggling with how this labour fits into the productive/reproductive scheme since farm women are often contributing to the family farm enterprise through labour situated not only in the field or barn, but also in the family household or even in the community. Despite the range of jobs and tasks they undertake for the farm, women still often do not have direct control over any financial resources or benefits their labour power produces for the farm. If wives are expected to do this labour as the work of any 'farm wife', or if their family farms are organised in such a way so as to elicit their support, how do we account for it in our theoretical paradigms?

As Delphy and Leonard (1992) point out, our accounting systems are ill prepared to deal with the extensive amount of work women do inside our family homes since most work done in urban and rural — farm and nonfarm — households fails to be counted. As they argue, we must be consuming raw and unprocessed food stuffs, purchasing lots of clothes or wearing very dirty ones, and hiring cleaning services or living in very untidy and unsanitary houses if we use our national economic accounting systems to calculate the value of women's domestic labour. The same gaps appear in the production processes on family farms because in the instances where somebody is not

getting paid to do the work, the work either isn't getting done — in which case production capacities can be expected to eventually collapse — or it isn't being counted.

Since it seems to be a failure in the accounting system rather than a case of the work not being done, the question remains: Why are we so wedded to theoretical dualisms and concepts which, at least implicitly if not explicitly, favour one kind of work over another? If our models continue to classify paid work in the formal economy as more productive or valuable than unpaid work in the informal or household economy, why do we continue to utilise them? In large part because we have been unable to imagine a true alternative. We have inherited an economic model and a way of speaking which serves to undermine and discount women's labour and contributions to both society and family farms. We are all left trying to make sense of the same social world so in some respects we are stuck with the language which precedes us. However, we can question that language and the meaning it places on women and their work.

At the same time, as researchers and academics we must be careful that our language and theoretical categories do not blind us from seeing the parallels in each others' research. Several studies have identified the presence of more than one kind of family owned and operated farm enterprise split according to their reliance on waged labour without acknowledging that even though different labels are being used they are actually referring to the same or similar realities. Family farms, family labour farms and family worked farms can easily be grouped together while corporate family farms, family farm businesses and labour employing farms are all discussing the increased reliance on hired labour for farm production. Because we have not made these links, we fail to appreciate the theoretical signifance of other people's research for our own studies.

We also fail to systematically apply our underlying theoretical arguments to all farm women. Consequently we are able to see one group of wives as incorporated in their husbands' work but not another. Failing to recognise that differences in farm wives' roles mirror differences in husbands' farming roles misses an opportunity to push our theoretical understandings forward. At this stage, one thing which is urgently needed to push our theoretical understandings forward is a clearer picture of just how wide ranging farm women's work activities are within each of the spatial work locations we use to discuss their work. In essence, we have failed to examine what lies within the 'black boxes' of household, on farm, off farm, and community work.

II. Spatial Work Locations: A Pandora's Box?

What is needed is a theoretical paradigm that enables us to analyse and accurately explain the complex work situations of farm women. The four spatial categories for farm women's labour have not been adequately defined or understood, a situation which often means each research project produces a different analysis of similar situations. This practice has resulted in a systematic over-simplification in our understanding of farm women's work. We need to re-examine the black boxes we have hitherto accepted. Namely we need to reconsider the standard analytic categories of household/reproductive labour, on farm, off farm and community work.

While extensive efforts have been made to document the kind and range of work farm women do, efforts to classify their work has often failed to reflect the diversity among farm women. In the end, farm wives are said to be engaged in work which encompasses or reflects specific spatial locations. Yet, however familiar, these theoretical categories remain ill-defined. This section briefly highlights some of the unanswered questions and issues lurking within these highly problematic classification schemes for farm women's work.

A. Household/ Reproductive Labour

When should work done in the household not be considered household labour? When should labour done elsewhere be considered reproductive labour? Should we include production for household consumption as part of the domestic labour sphere or should it be considered a separate and distinct category?

At present, some researchers collapse production for consumption, like making mittens and cooking for harvesting crews, with reproductive labour while others ignore it completely. Reimer emphasises this problem when he writes (1986: 152):

> Farm households produce a higher proportion of drapes, clothing, rugs, and baked goods, all products that do not require resources likely to be unique to farms.... Farm women clearly produce more goods for household consumption than do women from nonfarm households. Goods produced in this manner make a direct contribution to the survival of the farm by cutting costs and making extra cash available for the farm operation. These contributions are seldom, if ever, included in the analysis of farm households, however.

One strategy has been to treat some of this work such as cooking for harvesting crews as community volunteer work, thereby reducing the relevance of the work activity for the actual farm production process while giving it significance as a community event which unifies and strengthens the community. Shortall (1993: 176) provides an example of this interpretation by agreeing with Ness (1988):

> When Threshing day arrived, women made the meal and produced the festive atmosphere that made the day one of neighbourhood sharing and unity rather than merely one of work.

What is missed in this interpretation is how necessary this cooking activity was in order for the harvest to be completed. While a 'festive atmosphere' may have been present this approach negates the important role "women's work" had for the successful completion of the harvest. Suddenly when women are no longer cooking in their individual kitchens but cooking for their family and farm labourers in the community, their work is not domestic/household labour or an input to the operation of the farm, but 'voluntary community work'.

Another approach has been to suggest that farm women's production for consumption is really an unnecessary expenditure of labour time (Olfert *et. al.*, 1993). In other words, farm women "intensify" their household labour making 'homemade' items because they want to, not because they need to, do this work. Farm families are touted as having different cultural values whereby they want good wholesome food. They are simply implementing a lifestyle choice (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Still others explain this type of work activity as a carry over from the past (Sachs, 1996). Among farm women themselves this is often portrayed as work their grandmother or mother did so it is seen to be 'natural' for them to be doing it too.

But all of these explanations dismiss or gloss over the real issue of farm women's production for consumption: namely, WHY does it persist? And what contribution does it make to the family household and/or farm enterprise? Why does this work continue to be part of farm women's work processes? Can it really be explained as a romanticism with the past? The work by Bush (1982), Reimer (1985), Ghorayshi (1989) and McKinkley Wright (1995) all illustrate that women's domestic labour makes an important and valuable contribution to the family farm enterprise in addition to the family household. It is an area of farm women's work which should not be ignored simply because we are lacking data on the domestic labour of urban women or nonfarm rural women (Smith, 1987). Our failure to document and analyse the extent and kind of contributions women make to family farming through domestic labour speaks of a major lacuna in our understanding and study of farm women's lives and work.

B. On farm Work

On farm work has generally been the category of work pertaining to women's farm work, manual work or management work which directly relates to the farm's

commodity production. Since it tends to encompass both manual and management work we inadvertently overlook or deny the importance of a women's class position for shaping and influencing the kind of work she does for the family farm enterprise. Instead, we focus on the impact varying farm size, technology, and the presence or absence of hired labour has on the kind of work women do. A second problem we face in this spatial work sphere is that some women are unpaid for farm work while other women are paid for their farm work. Where are the lines drawn? And how does being paid or not being paid affect the work women do for the farm? Related to this, how do we explain women's unequal access to property and financial resources? A third issue is how do we delineate farm work from other work activities? How do we deal with women's incorporation into their husbands' farming jobs? Can farm wives stop supplying back-up, peripheral and additional services to their husband's farming jobs without placing their marriages and family farm operations in jeopardy? Does being a farm wife require one to work instead of, by proxy and alongside a farm husband — as Janet Finch (1983) found to be the case for many professionals' wives? Since the literature on farm women's work has not systematically examined their incorporation into their husbands' farming work, this last set of questions particularly needs more investigation.

What is the interplay between the family household and the farm enterprise? This question has plagued the literature since its inception with little resolution. Repeatedly, studies of farm women show they are engaged in several activities at one time and that traditional definitions of farm labour have been blind to much of the farm work done by women. Several studies have pointed out that part of farm women's work is just being available for work (Ghorayshi, 1989; Sachs, 1996). My own research confirms this concept that being available to go for parts, to pinch hit, to step in when needed is an important part of ongoing farm relations — and wives plan their lives and other work activities to accommodate the farm's need for flexible labour especially during peak and busy farm seasons.

Another concern within this spatial work sphere should be how women's on farm work is actually treated when it is remunerated — for example, only since the Canadian Income Tax Act was revised in 1980 can a farmer pay his wife a salary. Furthermore, the law states this salary must be commensurate with the price of such services in the market. This in and of itself is not problematic. However, the way farm women's labour is labelled or construed is not straightforward. For example, farm record keeping is generally labelled as book-keeping rather than farm management. This means farm wives are apt to be paid book-keeping wages which are substantially

lower than a manager's salary. When farm women's work activities are hard to classify or do not fit existing categories how, or even, does their work get remunerated?

C. Off farm Work

Off farm work is seemingly the easiest or most straight-forward spatial work location. It was meant to refer to women's work in the 'formal' economy. But even here problems can and do arise since often work in this sphere has been equated with cash earnings — which means work which occurs on the family farm or in the family household to generate cash has tended to be classified as off farm work.

This whole area of farm women's work is difficult to deal with since they experience as much diversity in the labour force as do other women. Peggy works three days a week as a receptionist/secretary while Dorothy worked full-time in senior management. Debra works at a small speciality store as a sales clerk during peak Christmas shopping hours while Perdita juggles part-time hours on a full-time basis at a large department store. Daphne works in her father's retail business one day a week so he can have time off. The conditions under which these three women work in retail are very different, yet they are all involved in sales jobs. Other women work from home. For instance, Penny gives music lessons after school and in the evenings while Paige minds her neighbour's children. Danielle does contract work from home designing newsletters, business cards, posters and advertisements.

All of this work has been subsumed under off farm work, "income generating" (McKinley Wright, 1995; Sachs, 1996) or my preferred label "cash generating" (Cooper, 1989) activities. I prefer cash generating because 'income' can often be construed to mean wages or a salary, implying a more or less permanent position in the formal economy — rather than farm diversification projects or seasonal 'income' generating work such as bed and breakfasts or earnings from craft shows.

In earlier research (Machum, 1992), I found women were setting up their own businesses — sometimes completely outside farming and at other times their 'own' farm operation — and becoming self-employed or petty commodity producers in their own right. Clearly women who set up their own businesses are not experiencing the same work situation as women working for a wage.

Nevertheless, the type of business the farm wife establishes must also be looked at in detail — is it simply a way of diversifying the farm operation? Is she a partner of the farm and this is a way of ensuring overall economic success of the farm enterprise?

Could this business be done anywhere or is it specific to the farm situation — for example, is she raising a herd of beef cattle or selling eggs? Whatmore (1991) includes any farm related activities which do not fit into the farm's main commodity production into women's off farm work if they are earning an income or cash from such work. I would be more reluctant to do so, since I see new and value-added farm activities — such as growing and drying flowers, raising beef cattle on a potato farm, processing the food grown on the farm — as more of a farm diversification strategy than a distinct and separate labour process, as Whatmore suggests. Especially since such business activities would unlikely take place without the land or other inputs the family farm enterprise provides.

Finally we need to consider how farm women's cash earnings — either from wages sales or in the form of profits/investments — get spent. Even if they do not get added to the farm enterprise through farm debt payments, or a farm purchase, how do they contribute to the overall financial success of the family farm enterprise and/or the family household? Overall, the way women spend their cash earnings needs to be examined more carefully since whatever earnings are used in the family household can also be argued to mean savings for the farm enterprise as it does not have to cover these household costs (Shortall, 1993) or provide an adequate return to the farm family in order to sustain the family farm household (Koski, 1982).

D. Community Work

As previously mentioned, work which takes place within the community like cooking for harvesting crews has often been classified as community work (Shortall, 1993). I would argue that the preservation of the community spirit through such work is an unintended, albeit positive, consequence of women's 'farm work'. We need to examine farm women's involvement in farm organisations in this light, since this may be one way farm women work for the family farm enterprise. If they are gathering information, staying informed of financial opportunities and programs the family farm can apply for, not to mention learning how to make those applications, we would be wrong to classify such activities as leisure — which is often the way most labour done within the community realm is treated. Interestingly, farm women's community work and political activism is only beginning to be studied. As in women's involvement in the formal economy, all manner of experiences and interests emerge among farm women. The challenge will be to link farm women's varied community activities to their personal, family and farm interests in order not to dismiss or ignore it as a consequence of misinterpreting it for something other than it is.

III. Accounting for Farm Women's Work

Pamela Smith (1987) presents decision-making as a separate sphere of work distinct from domestic, on farm and off farm work. But I would argue such an approach presupposes decision-making is distinct from other work locations and categories. Gasson and Errington (1993) include decision-making under farm management work. I would be inclined to argue it is a facet of all spheres of work irrespective of where that work is occurring. However, this literature has tended to single it out, emphasising farm related decisions, as an indicator of the extent to which farm wives are involved in the family farm enterprise. But as Buchanan *et. al.*, (1982: 8) reason "...many farm business decisions are in fact family decisions". Which should at least lead us to question the validity of singling out decision-making as a reflection of 'farm management' rather than 'family management'.

The emphasis on 'decision-making' as opposed to manual work is based on the separation of decision-making from execution in capitalist enterprise, where managers strive to remove from the workers the skills which give them any power to establish their own conditions of work and monopolise control over the labour process in their own hands. In this way mangers have control over workers and are able to rearrange the labour process in order to get more out of them as the opportunity arises. In liberal thinking, this leads to a privileging of management work as 'brain work' appropriate to betters, making it worth more, while workers do manual work of low value and social prestige. I would guess that this privileging of decision-making work is leaking into a consideration of farm women's work as some researchers try to elevate the wife's contribution beyond 'mere' manual labour and identify her as co-decision maker with her husband...making her part of the owner/manger team and not just the equivalent of part-time hired workers in what she does. It should also be remembered liberals are concerned with income and social status in their thinking; they are trying to identify farm women with the managerial function, not just the unskilled labour status of farm workers...the worst paid, least unionized and least prestigious group of workers in the industrial economy (Wall, 1994; Padavic, 1993).

In the end, how women organise their work and the work they do changes over time depending upon their family, farm and community. Present day work strategies may not be a possibility later on as each of these dimensions interact and change. The work farm wives do within each of the spatial work categories can shift in form and character during a woman's life time. As in Barbara and Daisy's case, a woman's cash generating activities may mean working in paid employment during her early years of marriage. When her children are young, she may intensify household based

production enabling her to sell baked goods, jam and crafts at the local farmer's market[5]. Or, like Betty, Pamela and Denise, she may establish her own farm enterprise or farm related business which enables the farm to diversify while giving her her own farm responsibilities and income. She may establish her own unrelated farm business as did Phoebe.

Often within each spatial category of work, researchers establish the presence of paid and unpaid work, productive and reproductive labour or direct and indirect support. For example, in my own research I found some women were paid for farm work while others were not. The mounds of laundry Paige does during the planting season for her potato farm to maintain its elite seed status is an example of productive labour which would normally be overlooked as reproductive labour. Delphy and Leonard's (1994) point that we must be eating 'raw chicken out of greengrocers' bags' also illustrates how many aspects of 'reproductive' labour are indeed 'productive' labour in another context. Women's cash generating work can either support the farm through debt repayment or support the farm by maintaining the family household thereby reducing the return the farm needs to realise in order to keep both the family and farm functioning and/or prospering.

As researchers we have catalogued farm wives' and farm women's work according to its spatial location and then we have attempted to evaluate it using what many have identified as inadequate *a priori* theoretical categories. What is more, these categories — paid and unpaid, productive and reproductive, direct and indirect — do not directly correlate, even though they are often used interchangeably. Paid and unpaid labour reflects a focus on the market or formal and informal economies. Such an approach is indicative of liberal economics and the liberal feminist paradigm. Its focus is on what is bought and sold and how profit is made in the market. Productive and reproductive labour reflects the Marxist concern with production and the work processes which enable capitalists to obtain surplus value and thus accumulate capital. In this scheme, those who own the means of production have the advantage over those who do not. Invariably the focus shifts to the social relations of production and the economic value of labour regardless of whether it is paid or unpaid. Those who focus on direct and indirect support (Ceboratev *et. al.*, 1985; Smith, 1987) are attempting to evade these

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[5] While no women in my present research were engaged in such activities. I did find this to be the case during previous research (Machum, 1992). The persistence of Christmas craft sales and the numerous craft and bake tables to be found at farmers' markets suggests such activities remain an important source of income for some farm women. Reimer (1985) also records the presence of intensified household based production as a source of income for some women in his study when they sell such products.

deeper ideological differences by looking at the different ways women's labour supports the family farm enterprise.

Pamela Smith (1987) uses this latter approach in her work. She argues farm women's work would be better classified as direct involvement, indirect support and direct assistance. In proposing this typology, Smith believes she has provided an alternative model for studying farm women's work. In fact all she has done is collapse direct and indirect support with spatial work locations: direct involvement refers to women's work on the farm; indirect support is women's work in the home; while direct assistance pertains to women's work off the farm (Smith, 1987: 155-163).

The reliance on juxtaposed dualisms, once again produces a limited understanding of just how intertwined the family and the farming enterprise really are — and for that matter other family businesses like Berteaux and Berteaux-Wiame's (1981) bakers, Adkin's (1995) pub keepers and even Finch's (1983) 'two for the price of one occupations', since not only do their husbands' jobs structure their wives lives but they also elicit wives' contributions to men's work. The tendency in the farm women's literature has been to string unpaid, reproductive, and indirect support together, which ultimately negates this work since it is implicitly secondary and less important than the 'real' farm business work which is paid, 'productive' and providing direct support to the farm. Even if it isn't intentional, these schemata give primacy to women's 'productive' farm work and 'paid employment' over their 'reproductive' household work and 'unpaid labour'.

On the surface, at least, direct contributions seem to correspond to the ways in which wives contribute to husbands' work; while indirect contributions are more reflective of the ways in which wives' work is 'incorporated' into husbands' work. 'Direct' contributions are those straightforward, unequivocal farm related transactions — manual work, farm management or financial investments in the farm enterprise. 'Indirect' contributions tend to refer to those circuitous acts which ultimately benefit the farm but do not appear in the farm accounts. In fact, the whole debate over direct and indirect contributions stems from 'accounting' practices. Once the counting of farm women's work began, 'accounting' principles were applied to this labour — could it be made visible in the farm's accounts? If it could be, it became a direct contribution, if it couldn't be it was *ipso facto* an indirect contribution. Not surprisingly then, domestic labour on the family farm was relegated to an indirect status just as it has been elsewhere. I, on the other hand, would be inclined to argue a contribution is a contribution regardless of whether the farm enterprise receives it

directly in the form of a cash infusion in the farm accounts or farm labour or indirectly through the reduction of household costs or reducing the need for the farm to provide an adequate income to maintain the family household.

In the end, looking at the internal relations of production requires an understanding of the external relations of production and how they impinge on and affect the family household. Luxton's (1980) discussion of the way miners' wives in Flin Flon, Manitoba stand outside the mine waiting for pay packets is indicative of how important income is for organising family households. If farm commodities mean substantially different financial realities for family farm households — as they do on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick — we need to appreciate how they are reflected in: one, family households in terms of the planning, organising and purchase of household items; two, women' s cash generating activities. Likewise, if domestic work encompasses farm production activities — as the case study demonstrates it sometimes does — such work is ill understood as 'domestic' work simply because it occurs within the family homestead.

Clearly, the spatial work locations and dualistic categories which have been used to analyse farm women's work have served to obscure and conflate the differences which exist between farm women and their work situations. The differences which exist between farm women themselves have to be acknowledged and recognised. Only then will we be able to decide if it is enough to dissect and subsection spatial work locations and theoretical dualisms, or if brand new categories for analysing farm women's work need to be developed.

Transcending these theoretical problems will be difficult because these analytic dualisms are firmly stuck in our heads as a meaningful and even necessary distinction to be made. Despite almost every single article recognising family farms combine families with farming, they proceed by analytically separating them. This theoretical division leads to taking each dimension, considering the dynamics within that dimension and then trying to establish how they interact and interconnect. It is this methodology which produces 'family life cycles' and 'farm business cycles' and their subsequent melding; or discussions of internal versus external relations of production; as well as reflections on women's careers and stages of the family life cycle. Moreover, these 'stages' or 'cycles' are built on linear modernisation models of development — where all people are seen to move progressively along the same trajectory, something which has certainly been demonstrated not to be the case since some people actively resist the changes going on around while others embrace them.

Again and again, the theoretical paradigms we consciously and unconsciously accept and endorse emerge in our discussions and analyses of farm women and their work. Liberalism and Marxism coupled with feminism have produced their own theoretical labyrinth. But whatever their theoretical penchant, scholars have divided and classified farm women's work by its spatial work location. They have then proceeded to collapse and integrate broader theoretical constructs — which have themselves been built on theoretically loaded dualisms — into these spatial locations. In this way, researchers have avoided confronting deeply rooted theoretical debates. However, their strategy has effectively masked over and concealed the multiple and varied contributions farm women make to family farming — even though this is the very task most set out to do!

III. Implications for Future Research

In order to better reflect and document farm women's lived lives, future research will need to question the language and paradigms which have been widely used and endorsed. Our theoretical paradigms provide the means "not to know" the extent of diversity and difference in farm women's lives and work situation. This task requires a more careful examination of the key concepts and categorisations — including farm women, family farms, farming, productive and reproductive, paid and unpaid, direct and indirect, on farm, off farm, domestic labour and community work — we have used to study farm women's work. In accepting these terms without questioning their meaning or the implications they have for our research design, methods and analysis, we have masked over very real differences in farm women's lives.

If we are to achieve a better understanding of farm women's work in the next fifteen years than we have in the past fifteen years, we need to stop seeing farm women and their lives as anomalies to theoretical constructs. Instead we need to build theories which better explain their complex work lives. This can best be accomplished by first considering how the farms women live and/or work on structure their lives and work before considering the contributions women make to agriculture. All too often we have failed to ask how family farming contributes to women's work preferring to study how women contribute to family farming.

While we have learned a great deal about women's contributions to agriculture, we continue to know very little about how agricultural production and the way family farms are organised contribute to women's work. Only by asking this question will we begin to understand why farm women are engaged in different work activities, why they place emphasis on one type of work in one spatial location rather than another

type of work in the same or another spatial location. This is the question which will allow us to explore and begin to understand the diverse situations farm women face and the plethora of responses they have to their messy and complex realities.

Clearly more research needs to be done examining the diverse jobs women undertake in different spatial locations. We need to establish how instrumental the farm communities and the kinds of family farms women live on are in determining the kinds of work women will or will not do. Certainly we need to consider the ways farm women and their families resist social change or embrace it, and the subsequent impacts their strategies have on their family farms and work.

Farm women and their work ultimately needs to be studied and understood within its social, economic and political context (Cooper, 1989). Such a mandate is particularly challenging given that farm women and their family farms are embedded in ongoing historical processes. Nevertheless, it is only from studying and understanding the complex and messy reality of women's lived lives that we can begin to appreciate how things are organised, the situations created from organising things in a particular way, and how and why farm women respond as they do. How farm women respond will feedback to shape the social world they confront in the future. Understanding this process and the implications of present actions for the future would surely be relevant to farm women as they make decisions and act upon them.

While it may not be possible to totally abandon the theoretical dualisms we have inherited from past thinkers, we would be amiss to totally embrace them. It will only be through persistent questioning and re-evaluation that we will find an alternative and more appropriate theoretical paradigm and language for conceptualising, researching, analysing and discussing farm women's work. At this point, the farm women's literature is still struggling to see the limitations inherent in the language they use and the paradigms they've built with it.

APPENDIX A:
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This research project began from the concern that most research on farm women's work tended to be ahistorical, insensitive to the disparate situations of women in different kinds of farm operations, and constrained by 'productive' and 'reproductive' work categories. From the outset I was interested in studying the impact that a farm's commodity production had on farm women's work. Since I grew up in a rural community where dairy, cattle, pigs, sheep and extensive vegetable fields overlapped, it seemed obvious to me that what a farm sets out to produce defines the work which needs to be done — while other factors such as the size of the farm, its level of mechanisation and whether or not family or wage labour is used are more reflective of how the job will get done. Yet, during my perusal of the literature I did not find any research which systematically studied 'how the job to be done' affected women's work patterns and activities. The two central questions which came to shape the research project are:

1. How is farm wives' work affected by the farm's commodity production — in terms of how the commodity is produced, the demands production makes on the farm family and how its marketing arrangements affect family finances? and

2. How does farm wives' work change over their lifetime as they and their families change, as their family farms change and as the farm community changes?

In essence, the aim of this research project was to determine whether or not, and if so how, a farm's commodity production impacted on farm women's work during their lifetime as their families, farm and community changed.

To answer these questions required a research design which would establish what farm wives do on particular farm types and whether or not their work patterns are consistent from one farm type to the next. From the research, I wanted to ascertain whether or not, and if so how, a farm's commodity production affected farm wives' work. It was, therefore, the farm's commodity production which formed the back drop for studying and analysing farm wives' work rather than the dynamics of family households. What happened inside family households was a secondary, peripheral issue for this project. The primary concern was how did what the farm set out to produce — and the subsequent way it organised its production processes and marketed and sold its product —affect the work lives of farm wives?

Overwhelmingly the literature has focused on family households, universal farm characteristics like farm size, levels of technology and the presence of capitalist relations of production or personal differences to explain farm wives varied work experiences. They have not focused on differences arising on farms because they are producing different commodities for sale. This meant developing a preliminary study into *terra incognita*. Consequently, an extensive survey approach would have been inappropriate since I knew neither what I would find nor the exact questions or range of answers to expect. Gasson and Errington (1993) and Keating and Little (1994) provide two examples of how farm women's work changes in response to different stages in the family life cycle and farm business cycle, but are other factors at work? If so, what are they? A large scale survey would not have established the *processes at work* on family farms engaged in different commodity production. I needed to know how women contributed to family farming and how family farming contributed to women's work. While there was a wealth of data to guide the first question, there was virtually nothing to be found on the second question. Even though, my knowledge of farm communities led me to believe farm wives' work would be affected by the farm's commodity production, I did not know how it would affect their work.

Yin argues case studies are an appropriate strategy when researchers want to establish causal relations or processes, or to consider how and why questions rather than when, where and what questions (Yin, 1994: 5-8). Case studies attempt to go beyond the surface of an event or phenomena to look at the "more complex issues of what is meant by what is happening" (Edwards *et. al.*, 1994: 86). Case studies attempt to provide an in-depth, intensive look at a research question or issue and not to provide general, extensive information on a topic (Rose, 1991: 196). They do not attempt to look at a whole population or society but at a specific situation. As such, a comparative case study design

employing a semi-structured interview to gather women's farm and work histories would enable me to explore how commodity impacts on farm wives' work.

Categorising farm women according to their farm's commodity production immediately leads to a number of 'sub-groups'. The Canadian government has, in fact, established eleven farm types based on a farm's commodity production. "They are: dairy, cattle, hog, poultry and eggs, livestock combination, grain and oilseed, potato, tobacco, fruit and vegetable and greenhouse and nursery. Any farms not included in these types are classified as 'other types'" (Statistics Canada, Catalogue 21-522E, 1993: 7). Focusing on such differences would, however, not make research results generalisable to the farm women's population which, at least, is one explanation as to why so few researchers start here. Studying all eleven farm types would not be feasible given time and resources and too many groups would make an in-depth examination of how exactly commodity affects farm wives' work unmanageable. I decided I would focus on two commodity sectors. This decision was criticised at a farm women's meeting where one farm woman angrily asked me, "didn't I know that more than milk and potatoes were being produced on New Brunswick farms?" I assured her I did but I felt it was important to focus on two sectors in order to have a more intensive study which examined how commodity affected farm wives' work. I was, effectively, doing an exploratory study into *terra incognita*, and more extensive research involving other commodity sectors would need to be pursued by myself or others later.

I chose Canada's East Coast province of New Brunswick as my research site because its two major farm commodities — dairy and potato — are strikingly different. Potato production in New Brunswick is an intense and seasonal process, involving the planting, tending and harvesting of a field crop. Dairy farms are all-year operations involving animal husbandry and milk collection on a daily schedule. Potatoes are sold in 'open', uncertain markets dominated by a few large food processors, usually under contracts which bind the farm enterprise tightly to the networks of multinational corporations. By contrast, milk is sold in a 'closed' market protected and regulated by the provincial Milk Marketing Board. The Milk Marketing Board sells and monitors quotas for each farm enterprise and negotiates the price received at the farm gate from milk processors. These highly contrasting differences would make them an ideal starting place to explore the impact of commodity on farm wives' work.

At the same time the two industries are comparable. Both potato and dairy farming play a major role in New Brunswick agriculture, the two commodities rank first and second for all farm cash receipts in the province, they both have high overhead costs and have both seen major technological advancements in the past few decades. Being able to focus on one province was important for simplifying the study of policies which have governed family farm enterprises over time. Padavic's (1993) research demonstrates the wide ranging impact different social and agricultural policies can have on agricultural commodities in different regions.

Comparing farm wives' work in these two commodity sectors would enable me to ascertain whether or not women's work is the same regardless of the farm's commodity production. Comparing two commodity production processes would also test how similar or divergent the work patterns of farm women really are. If differences did emerge in work patterns and activities for the women engaged in these highly contrasting commodities, I would need to establish why. What processes were at work affecting farm wives' work patterns? The highly contrasting nature of these industries would more easily permit a discussion of causal relations or processes at work on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms.

Ragin (1994) points out that comparative research involves selecting cases from a specific and known set. Basically the researcher begins with an analytic framework which establishes the characteristics of the categories they are seeking to compare:

> To assess causation, comparative researchers study how diversity is patterned. They compare cases with each other and highlight the contrasting effects of different causes. Comparative researchers view each case as a combination of characteristics ... and examine similarities and differences in combinations of characteristics across cases in their efforts to find patterns (Ragin, 1994: 112).

This has certainly been the aim of my research project since it sought to look at the similarities and differences in farm wives' work patterns on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. Finding women who fit into these categories could not be achieved through a random sampling technique. Available lists would provide information on holdings or households rather than the people in those households. Besides, lists are often outdated as soon as they are produced (Doreian and Woodard, 1992). A second issue which would have emerged from using existing lists was 'what purpose were the lists devised for in the first place' — or who was and who was not on it?

A list of farm holdings received from the New Brunswick Federation of Agriculture would only contain farms, usually listed by the male operator, who use their services. Past research indicates these services are used most heavily by large, highly mechanised operations rather than smaller, low mechanised farms. In addition, it would not be clear *who* the farm wife is — which would make initial contact very difficult. While the farm women's groups in the province were willing to give me access to their membership lists, other researchers have noted that only a small proportion of all farm women participate in such groups. Farm wives from smaller, less mechanised operations tend not to have as much time for community organisations because of the high labour demands of the farm operation (Shortall, 1993; Leckie, 1993). Finally, the Canadian Census of Agriculture surveys all agricultural holdings which produce products for sale, but they are unable to provide disaggregated data since farm families provide the information on the basis of confidentiality (Statistics Canada, 1992). In effect, these sources would not provide the appropriate information for 'peopling' the research categories I had identified. To 'people' my research categories, I needed 'people' who fulfilled the following criteria: one, they had to be farm wives; two, they had to be or have been growing potatoes or milking cows; and three, they had to be engaged in 'family farming' not hobby or subsistence farming or corporate farming (for a discussion of this third dimension see Chapter Three).

My research design meant I needed to do purposive sampling rather than random sampling. I was not studying a general farm population which would enable a random sample to represent the entire farm population. Instead the 'population' I was researching was farm wives on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick. Yin argues what is needed in such a situation is a replication logic rather than a sampling logic (Yin, 1994: 45-50). In other words, cases should be selected in order to provide similar results (literal replication) or contrasting results for predictable reasons (theoretical replication). I tried to find women in contrasting situations in order to examine a range of experiences and backgrounds so that I might determine where the similarities and differences existed in women's work both within a commodity sector and across commodity sectors. In order that the reader may establish how my sample of dairy and potato farms — established through 'replication logic' — compares to the New Brunswick population of dairy and potato farms, I have 'intercalibrated'[1] my sample with New Brunswick data in Appendix D. But here, I discuss my sampling procedure and methods.

I used a snowball technique to locate farm wives who fit the research criteria. As explained below, snowball sampling involves asking key informants or interviewees to suggest further potential interviewees:

> Snowball sampling involves using a small group of informants who are asked to put the researcher in touch with friends who are subsequently interviewed, then asked about their friends and interviewing them until a chain of informants has been selected (Burgess, 1990: 55 quoted in May, 1993: 100).

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[1] Colin Bell (1968: 11) explains the process of intercalibration as follows: "Intercalibration has been defined by Southall as relating the distribution of objective criteria thought to be relevant among the subjects of intensive study to their average distribution in the population as a whole and in particular relevant categories as revealed by samples. The degree of representativeness of the persons intensely studied will then be known. The result is that all the qualitative data will refer to a sample of known representativeness in terms of the major quantifiable criteria, although the sample was not randomly drawn (Southall, 1961: 27)".

A practical reason for using a snowball technique for identifying farm wives to interview related to the issue of gaining access. Snowballing was more effective than using a 'cold' list to make initial contact with farm wives to interview because it enabled me to identify a mutual acquaintance; as well as identifying contrasting cases to build up a more diverse database.

It was important to be connected to people in the farm community in order to gain co-operation for my project. The agricultural community in New Brunswick has a long history of distrust due to business and government bodies misrepresenting themselves as 'academic' researchers. The New Brunswick agricultural community is an instance of the situation Tim May identifies:

> It may be the case that the people whom the researcher wishes to interview are not amenable to direct approaches or are difficult to trace. In these circumstances, the technique of snowball sampling may be employed...This form of non-probability sampling is very useful for gaining access to certain groups (May, 1993: 100).

It was very important for people to locate who I am, where I come from and who I know in the community. Even with community contacts, some women were very suspicious of my research and intensely interviewed me before proceeding with the interview. Many of the initial phone conversations I had with a potential interviewee began with "Why are you calling me? Who gave you my name?" — in other words, 'how did you come to know about me?' Being able to connect myself to the farm community was a necessary component for gaining entry.

A potential drawback of the snowball approach was that I would only end up talking to like minded people or "inherit the decisions of each individual as to whom is the next suitable interviewee" (May, 1993: 100). I tried to avoid this problem by asking interviewees to direct me to other women who they thought had contrasting work histories and situations. I also found myself going back to the 'research map' to re-examine the literature and my knowledge of the community to make sure potential gaps were not overlooked. However, I was not always able to identify farm wives who fit the gaps I identified. For example, I was keen to interview a dairy farm wife who had off-farm employment. The women identified to 'fit this criteria' by previous interviewees, turned out to be working regularly as volunteers or to have recently stopped working even though they had previously worked full-time off the farm. In the end, I still did not manage to interview a dairy farm wife who had off-farm employment. In Appendix G, I present a tabulated version of some selected socio-personal characteristics so the reader may ascertain the range of 'women' to be found among my respondents.

The research questions were trying to establish what women do on farms producing different commodities, how women's work changed during their lifetime and what prompted women to change their work activities. A survey approach might have answered the first question. But the second and third research questions demanded a more in-depth analysis of farm wives' family, farm and work histories. In-depth, semi-structured interviews would provide more pertinent data for analysis. Obviously, each individual's work history would vary but how women came to be involved in specific work activities and how their work changed could only be gleaned from learning their individual stories. This meant that each interview focused on that particular woman's experiences — making the data not directly comparable in a statistically meaningful way. It also means the interviews have generated more data than is contained in the case study analysis. In effect, I have a small number of cases with a large number of features; unlike census or survey data which generates a large number of cases in relation to a small number of variables. My approach has been to remain true to my initial research questions and analytic categories — they have set the framework for analysis and discussion. This has meant moving back and forth between the interview data, 'teasing out' the story it has to tell and the theoretical arguments which emerged from the literature on wives, work and farming. This thesis has been concerned with addressing the two research questions identified at the beginning of this appendix. Other questions and issues have emerged throughout my analysis and where appropriate I have identified them and the need for future research but it has not been within the scope of this research project to pursue them here.

In total I interviewed thirty-three people: thirty farm wives and three key informants. Before beginning the interview, I briefly described my project as outlined in the consent form in Appendix B. Those interviewed were asked to sign the consent form establishing that their participation was entirely voluntary; they were free to refuse to answer any questions; and they were also free to withdraw from the interview at any time. At this time, I ensured the respondents that under no

circumstances would their name or identifying characteristics be included in the thesis. I interviewed sixteen women from dairy farms, twelve women from potato farms and two women from farms which produced both commodities using a semi-structured interview (see Appendix C for more details). Interviews were conducted from November 1995 to September 1996 in the interviewees' farm homesteads across rural New Brunswick. Many women also took me on farm tours once the interview was completed. After each interview I formally thanked people for participating in my research project by sending thank you notes. I hope this will have a twofold effect: one, it will make it easier for other researchers to enter the field; and two, it will help me return to the field for further research projects.

Like most case studies, this comparative case study has employed a multi-methodological approach including interviews, archive data and participant observation and although it did not involve any large scale surveys, it has extensively employed the statistical data available from Statistics Canada. Few case studies employ a single methodological approach preferring to use a variety of both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to collect data (Edwards *et. al.*, 1994; Hakim, 1987; Looker *et. al.*, 1989; Pettigrew, 1990; Rose, 1991; Stoecker, 1991; Yin, 1994). The methods used range from surveys, interviews, life histories, and content analysis to participant observation (Edwards, 1994; Stoecker, 1991).

Using a variety of data collection techniques allows the case study approach to provide "more rounded and complete accounts of social issues and processes" (Hakim, 1987: 63) Advocates argue that the use of multiple methods, a process they call triangulation, helps researchers deal with the perceived problems of validity and bias in this research approach by producing findings which are based on a convergence of information rather than a singular research methodology (Edwards, 1994: 46-47; Rose: 1991: 201; Stoecker, 1991: 105-106; Yin, 1994: 90-94). They argue that if several different types of research and sources point to the same conclusions then the research results are strengthened.

Research findings can also be strengthened by designing a multiple case study. A multiple case study is a more reliable research design than a single case because it provides replication within the study (Hakim, 1987: 63). Every farm woman in my study is, in a sense, an individual case. Multiple cases are used to look for similarities, differences and emerging patterns to develop an understanding of what is happening in the 'real' world. A multiple case design "can be based on the logic of comparison, diversity or replication" (Rose, 1991: 200). A comparative research design is very useful for interpreting historical phenomena and advancing theory (Ragin, 1994: 109-111) — which made it a suitable strategy for approaching my research questions.

Criticisms of past research has led case study advocates to build into their research designs a clear rationale for the choice of case, or cases, they are using. Cases should be selected on the basis of pre-existing theoretically informed knowledge of the phenomena under study (Hakim, 1987; Hamel, 1993; Rose, 1991; Sayer *et. al.*,1985). Such theoretical underpinnings enable those pursuing case studies to determine whether or not they are choosing the case(s) for their typicality, contrasting or extreme character (Rose, 1991: 193). Hakim argues the quality of any case study research "depends on the degree of fit between the questions to be addressed and the particular case, or cases selected for the study" (Hakim, 1987: 64). For me, this meant identifying and interviewing wives on family farms engaged in dairy or potato production rather than establishing a random statistically representative sample of the farm population.

APPENDIX B:
THE INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

It is the standard practice for academic researchers in Canada to gain informed consent from potential participants in the research process before proceeding with any project which involves human subjects. Basically every Canadian University has an Ethics Committee which reviews each potential research project and the proposed data collection technique to establish whether or not the project meets appropriate standards. My Canadian funding agency, the *Social Science and Humanities Research of Canada*, requires that "all research involving human subjects be approved by the ethics review committee of the institution at which the principal investigator is employed". In order to meet these standards, I explained my research project to potential respondents using the following consent form and asked them to sign the consent form before proceeding with the interview:

My name is Susan Machum. I am doing research on a project entitled *Farm Wives' Work on Dairy and Potato Farms in New Brunswick, Canada.* The project is part of my Ph.D. research at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. I am studying at Edinburgh University under a scholarship there. If you have any questions that you would like to direct to my thesis supervisor, Professor Colin Bell, you can contact him at: University of Edinburgh, Department of Sociology, 18 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9LN, Scotland (Telephone: 011-44-131-650-4000).

I am comparing farm women's work on potato farms and dairy farms because I think that the commodity you are producing influences the work you do. I want to document what women do, understand their contribution to the farm enterprise and try to explain the work patterns I find. I think that farm women's work has a lot to teach us about women and work generally. If you have further questions or comments about my research during this year I can be contacted: c/o Department of Sociology, University of New Brunswick, P.O. Box 4400, Fredericton, New Brunswick, E3B 5A3 (Telephone: 506-453-4849).

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the project. Before we start the interview, I would like to emphasise that:

- your participation is entirely voluntary;
- you are free to refuse to answer any question; and
- you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time.

The interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to myself. Excerpts from the interview may be part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in the report.

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you and you agree to be interviewed.

_____Signed

_____Date

_____Name Printed

_____Address

_____

Would you like me to send you a report on the results of the project:

Yes No (please circle one)

APPENDIX C:
THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thirty-three people participated in this research, three key informants and thirty farm wives were interviewed between November 1995 and September 1996. One key informant, Keith — the only male interviewed, provided information on structural changes in agriculture and a broad overview of agricultural policy. A second key informant, Kelly, provided valuable information on farm women's organisations and political activism. The third key informant, Krista, was a farm woman operator who had her own dairy farm.

The Interviews

The interviews with Keith and Kelly occurred early in the research process and they helped me by first, guiding me through existing material and secondly, providing an initial list of farm wives to interview. Both Keith and Kelly know the farm community well as they are both farming and politically active. Keith highlighted the issues and concerns facing farmers today. It was his observation of how quickly dairy farms must deal with the consequences of unhealthy cows compared to the relatively lengthy time potato farms have before the negative consequences of pushing the soil to the limits are realised which reinforced how the rhythms of farming differ from one commodity to the next — not just in terms of production and marketing but also in terms of environmentally sustainable practices. Kelly patiently walked me through all the farm women's organisations in Canada, federal and provincial structures and how organisations are affiliated. Her introduction proved invaluable for understanding the recent and growing literature on farm women's organisations and political activism. She also introduced me to the current debates and emerging conflicts between government departments, farm organisations and farm women's organisations. Kelly and Keith have continued to show support and interest in my research throughout the past three years and I thank them for their ongoing encouragement.

I interviewed Krista after I heard her speak at a conference when I was quite far into my interviews. Krista owns and operates a dairy farm in New Brunswick. Like most female operated farms in Canada, her farm is smaller than average milking about twenty-seven cows a day with a milk quota of 24 kg of butter fat. Her situation is quite unique in that she does have one brother and a sister but neither of them were interested in farming — yet they, along with her mother continue to own shares in the farm. In effect, Krista only owns one-quarter share of the farm but she is the sole person responsible for the financial risks, the day to day operations and the only family member supplying labour to the operation. She acknowledged this places her in a very precarious situation since family members scrutinise her relationships with men, on the one hand but refuse to invest time and money in the farm, on the other. Her labour and business acumen are only partially her own and she is always at risk of her siblings and mother demanding their 'share'. Even though she and her mother live on the same property it was clear their relationship was not rosy and Krista indicated their relationship had deteriorated since she had become involved in a relationship. My interview with Krista challenges the notion that female farm operators are independent farm women free to implement decisions as they like. Krista's interview has provided me with a back drop for comparing and contrasting the work of farm wives to the work of a female farm operator.

The thirty farm wives who participated in the project were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. Only one woman I contacted refused to be interviewed. She was an older woman whose mother had recently been hospitalised and she was "too busy caring for her mom to take the time for me to interview her". One woman, Daisy, was seriously ill when I first contacted her. She asked me to call her back in a month or two which I did and we were able to set up an interview. I was pleased when she told me she "had been wondering if I would call her back or if she should call me". Each interview was scheduled according to times and dates suggested by the farm wives themselves. They were conducted throughout the St. John River Valley, central and south-east New Brunswick and took place in the interviewees' farm homestead — with two exceptions. First, Delia was interviewed over two afternoons at the New Brunswick university she is attending because it fit more conveniently into her schedule. The second exception was the key informant interview with Krista. Here the interview took place in the barn which I think is reflective of at least one difference between farm wives and women farm operators. Farm wives, even if they are directly involved in farm work and day to day farm operations, are working from the family household, farmers and women farm operators are working from the barns and fields. This, and the fact that many women were interrupted,

baby-sitting or engaged in other activities during the interviews, is discussed more fully in Part Two. Once the interview was completed, many women also took me on farm tours.

The interviews were tape recorded but not transcribed. During the interview I took notes which I have relied on heavily for my analysis and presentation. However, I have used the tapes as a back-up and reviewed them to fill in gaps and to fill out the stories in my notes. But I do not feel tape recording enhanced either my initial interview or my overall data collection. Despite my efforts to have the tape recording be unobtrusive, women remained aware of it throughout the interview process. At times they referred to the fact the interview was being recorded, their trains of thought were broken when the tape had to be turned over or changed and they frequently asked at the end of the interview what I was going to do with the tapes — even though I assured them at the beginning they were for my own use. Their awareness of the tape recorder, even though only a flat microphone was visible, raises the question of how guarded were women in their responses? Unfortunately, I don't know but I do know it raised an uneasiness for some women. Their uneasiness raises, the unrelated, question of how willing target groups will be to be interviewed if researchers must archive their qualitative data in national research banks.

The purpose of the interview was to explore how farm wives' work has been shaped and influenced by 'family' farming, the farm's commodity production and the changing farm community. The interview was designed to find out how women came to be 'farmer's wives', what work women did in farm production, cash generating activities, the family household and in the community, how their work changed over-time and whether or not changes in their work occurred as the family structure changed or as the farm enterprise changed or as broader changes were occurring in the farm community. In effect, the interview sought to look at how women distributed their time and energy across the various work dimensions in order to discern whether or not the farm's *raison d'être* affected their work and if so how. From the interview material I wanted to know whether or not women in different commodity sectors allocate their labour differently between the operation and management of the farm, their family's reproduction, activities which generate or reduce the need for cash and volunteer work. Also, do women in different commodity sectors face different demands, constraints and opportunities? Is there a sharp differentiation in work patterns between farm wives according to commodity or are they travelling along the same trajectory? If they are travelling along the same trajectory, is it at the same speed and rate? What are the similarities and differences in work patterns which emerge for farm wives engaged in potato and dairy farming? To answer these questions I had to establish what farm wives were doing, how they prioritised their work activities, how they organised their work around family and farming, and how their work changed over time.

Each interview lasted from two to six hours and focused on farm wives' work on and off the farm, their educational and family backgrounds, their farm histories and their current family and work situation. The interview was structured around six focus areas: personal and family characteristics; family farm history; farm women's work; time and energy allocation; farm operations including commodity production; household finances and budgeting; and women's views on farming. The interviews aimed to focus on particular events in women's lives and women were encouraged to talk about their work histories, as well as their farm histories, pointing out events and times when their work or farms changed. Since the interview depended very much upon women telling their own stories, the focus of the interview invariably shifted to reflect their own interests, concerns and experiences. Consequently, none of the interviews were identical. Some women were comfortable discussing family stresses and tension management while others were not. Some divulged gross farm sales while others would not. Some were very informative about their farm operation while others were more reserved in their discussions. Each interview did, nevertheless, comprise of the six focus areas even though women were not asked exactly the same questions in the same order.

PERSONAL/ FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

- What is your educational background?
- Have you taken any specialised training courses (to operate farm machinery/ computer courses etc.)?
- What year were you born?
- How did you meet your husband? What year did you get married?
- How many children do you have? [Name, Age, Are they farming (Yes/No)

FAMILY FARM HISTORY

- When did you start farming on this property?
- Is this a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th... generation farm — inherited or purchased?
- Was your husband already farming when you married him?
- Is your name on the property deed for the farm and/ or the family household?
- Did you sign the bank loan for the farm property? (Have you signed for other loans, e.g. operating loans, loans for machinery)?
- Do you and your husband farm alone or with other family members or business associates? (With family members: Which ones? Why?/ Business associates: How many? When and why formed?)
- Is the farm a full-time or part-time operation?
- Does your husband work full-time on the farm or does he have off-farm employment? (Off-farm employment: What else does he do? Is it full-time or seasonal work? Why is he working off the farm? Do his wages get used for household or farm expenses? Has this always been the case?
- Is the farm incorporated? When was it incorporated? Would you like to incorporate? Why or Why not?
- Would you consider yourself a partner in the farm enterprise?

FARM WOMEN'S WORK:

- What is your current work situation? How is your day organised? What do you normally find yourself doing? Does your work change from season to season? If so, how?
- What kinds of work activities have you done in the past? How has your work on the farm, cash generating activities, in the household, and community changed over time? How would you say your work has changed as the family household and farm enterprise have changed?
- How would you say your **labour** is **distributed** across these four areas: farm work/ household work/ cash generation activities/ community networking?

FARM ENTERPRISE WORK:	
• management • administration • decision-making	Hire employees/ supervise work of hired help/ supervise work of family members/ decide who does what each day decide cropping or stocking policy/ deal with wholesale buyers/ deal with consumers in marketing product/ deal with salespeople responsible for artificial insemination program/ breeding have taken computer courses/ obtained certificates or licences for spraying pesticides or driving trucks
• book-keeping	keep farm accounts (are they computerised?)/ keep livestock records/ pay bills/ do farm banking/ prepare farm income tax forms
• field work	ploughing, disking, cultivating, seeding/ applying fertilisers/ harvesting/ operating trucks as part of farm work
• farm chores	feed and water livestock/ clean barn/ milk cows/ help with farm animals — doctoring, birthing
• farm maintenance	maintain or repair farm buildings, fences, machinery/ pick up repair parts or supplies
• emotional support to the farm enterprise	committed to the operation? wants to keep farming or would rather be doing something else? mediates family conflicts?
	transport hired help to and from work/ cook for hired help/ clean and wash for hired help/ entertain business visitors?
FAMILY HOUSEHOLD WORK:	
• home production	baking bread/ keeping a garden/ canning, preserving, freezing/ preparing meals/ keeping poultry or animals for family use/ doing home decorating and repairs/ knitting, sewing and quilting for family use (and gifts)
• household maintenance	do household cleaning/ laundry/ mending for family/ shopping for family/ do dish washing, cleaning and cooking for family
• child care	do you take children to the barn/ fields or do they stay indoors (how do child care arrangements affect your work?)/ supervise homework/ transport them to and from activities/ time to play and interact with children?
• elder care	care for aged or chronically ill household member?/ regularly visiting, assisting and/ or transporting elderly parents or in-laws?

CASH GENERATION ACTIVITIES:	
• "cottage industry"	craft production to sell, egg production, market gardening, farm vacations
• paid employment (off-farm)	selling insurance/ Avon (commission work) employee (salaried/ wage worker/ piece work)
• own business operation	What are they doing? Is it farm related? or not? Is it run from home or elsewhere? level of capital investment/ full-time or part-time work/ seasonal or year-round/ employees?
COMMUNITY NETWORKING:	
• farm/ business oriented	NFU/ Federation of Labour/ local business groups/ marketing boards/ farmer's market
• family/ children oriented	church (e.g. Sunday School teacher)/ community recreation/ leading 4H clubs/ transporting kids
• 'woman' oriented	Women's Institute/ women's church groups/ NB Farm Women's Network/ Canadian Farm Women's Network
• service oriented	Lions Club/ Red Cross/ Hospice/ Meals on Wheels

ALLOCATING TIME AND ENERGY:

- What work activities do you feel responsible for?
- What work activities take priority?
- Do you feel your overall contribution to the running of the farm is important? (YES: What do you consider to be your most important tasks/ roles?/ NO: Why not?)
- What would happen to the farm enterprise/ family household if you stopped doing what you do?
- Could the farm/ household afford to replace your labour with paid help?
- How much do you think it would cost to replace you?
- Do you think the family farm could operate effectively without your contribution?

FARM OPERATIONS

- What kind of farm operation do you have, i.e. what do you produce?
- How big is the operation? (quota/ and or acreage)? How has this changed during the life span of the farm (increases and decreases)? Would you like to see the farm operation get bigger?
- Do you have any full-time or part-time employees?
- Can you give me an estimate of the farm's gross sales last year ?
- What type of farm equipment do you have?

- What milking system do you use to milk the cows? or What harvesting system do you use to harvest the potatoes?
- Has this changed during your time on the farm? If so, how? Why? (Has your equipment influenced your ability to expand?)
- Who is responsible for the milking? calving? breeding (artificial insemination)? Who is responsible for planning the harvest? Organising pickers?
- What breed of cows do you have? or What variety of potatoes do you plant?
- Where/ how do you market your product? Who is responsible for this marketing?
- How and when do you get paid for your product?
- Do you have any cattle or other animals (in addition to the dairy cows/ as well as field crops)? What animals? How many? Who is responsible for looking after them?
- Has the farm used any government programs in the past ten years? Which ones? Who was responsible for applying to the program? Who was responsible for administering it?

HOUSEHOLD FINANCES AND BUDGETING:

- Do you get paid in any form for the farm work you do? (YES: What activities do you get paid for? How (wage/salary; share of profits/fee or fixed payment; payment in kind or other)?/ NO: Why not? Do you think you should?)
- Do you pay into the Canada Pension Plan from these earnings?
- Do you help decide if any loans should be taken out for farm expansions, equipment or household items? / Who negotiated any farm loans? /Have you co-signed any farm loans?
- Are the farm and household accounts separate or the same? i.e. Are bank accounts separate or combined?
- How does money come into the farm and family household (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, annually)?
- How is the family household financed? Does your husband take a salary from the farm? (YES: Does he contribute financially to household expenditures with his salary?/ NO: Do you think he should take a salary from the farm?)
- How is the farm enterprise financed? How do you and your husband decide what farm machinery or household equipment to buy?
- Do you find it easy to plan and budget finances? Do you feel there is enough income from the farm to run the household the way you would like to?
- How do you spend your money/ cash? What kinds of purchases do you make with: money you earn/ the 'household budget/ allowance'?
- Would you say farm machinery and household items are given the same priority to be repaired? If not, what is given precedence? Why? Would you like more control over finances?
- How important do you feel your income (through off-farm employment, business ventures) is for running the household?
- How do you feel about personal spending? Do you feel you have economic independence?

VIEWS ON FARMING:

- How do you think the farm community has changed since you started farming?
- What aspects of living on a farm do you like most? Dislike most?
- If you had it to do all over again, would you chose farming? (What keeps you farming day after day? Why are you committed to this industry?)
- Where do you see yourself and your farm operation in ten years? How would you like to see the farm change in the next ten years? the farm community?
- If you could change anything about the family farm operation, what would you change?
- What kind of changes would you like to see in your own work patterns/ schedule?
- Would you like your children to farm? Did you want your adult children to farm?
- Do you think the farm community will be better or worse off in ten years? Why?

APPENDIX D:
ANALYSING THE DATA

Once the interviews were completed I was faced with the task of ascertaining what these thirty women's lives told me about farm wives' work on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. The nature of the interview (described in Appendix C) meant I had extensive details about the family, farm and work histories of a relatively small number of people when compared to a survey method which produces a limited amount of information and knowledge about a large number of people. Consequently, in terms of analysing the data I faced three issues. First, I had to deal with the data itself in that I had to make the information in the interviews usable — i.e. I had to organise the material in such a way that it would be accessible and enable a cohesive and accurate analysis of the data — without losing sight of the women the data represented. Secondly, I had to determine what the data said or didn't say about farm wives' work on dairy and potato farms. Thirdly, I was concerned with who exactly was represented among the case study respondents or put another way, how reflective my case study sample was of the dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick, Canada. In the following appendix, I briefly outline how I dealt with these issues.

A. Coding the Data

As previously mentioned, I did not transcribe the interview tapes. However, I took extensive notes during the interview and immediately after each interview, I wrote my impressions of the interview and any details I had noticed during the interview which I felt might be relevant. As the number of interviews began to accumulate, I found myself noting similarities and differences in the comments and work patterns the current interviewee had with previous interviewees. These notes essentially formed the initial stages of analysis. They also enabled me to adapt questions and pursue specific lines of questioning in future interviews overlooked in earlier interviews.

After all the interviews were completed, the notes from each interview were then photocopied and the originals stored in a safe place in case the copies were lost or some disaster struck. At this stage, I produced short paragraph summaries from each interview outlining the details of their farm, work activities and any moments of transition which marked changes in women's work patterns — it is this work which was ultilised in Appendix E to produce the 'thumb-nail sketches' of the thirty women interviewed. It became evident that the data had to be correlated in some manner which would make it both accessible and meaningful for analysis.

I started by developing charts on: farm characteristics such as size of operation and farming methods; socio-personal characteristics including when the women married, started farming and details about their family; and their work activities in each of the spatial work locations. In effect, I had three charts reflecting different kinds of information for each commodity sector. That is to say, at the top of each chart I had specific information categories and down the side of the chart was each woman's name so there was effectively a row for each woman which when completed gave a synopsis of their farm, family and work histories. With this tool, I then began to read through each interview from start to finish noting the information on the relevant chart for each woman. It was these charts which were later used to develop all of the data charts contained in the thesis such as the family composition of the family farm and the socio-personal characteristics presented in Appendix G.

I now had a bird's eye view of the data and a number of tables summarising the data and range of responses. However, the aim of the thesis was to look at the historical processes at play and elements which affected and changed farm wives' work as well as the impact a farm's commodity production had on farm wives' work. These charts and tables did not really provide answers to these questions. So I went back to the interviews again. This time as I read the interviews I highlighted comments which corresponded to the different research questions using different colours. In effect, I colour coded my interviews. It was at this point that I used the tapes recorded during the interview to elaborate my notes where it seemed necessary or appropriate.

Once the interviews were colour coded, I developed 'summary' sheets for each research question. For example, I had a sheet marked 'Marriage and Farming" so I then went through the interviews writing down all the comments women had made about marriage and farming. I also had sheets entitled 'family conflict', 'milking methods', 'household labour', 'shifts in women's work', 'family/farm finances' and so on. These categories emerged from a process of both deduction — i.e. they were based on existing theoretical arguments and conclusions in the literature — and induction — for example, my interviews suggested 'family' farming meant dealing with a lot more than the nuclear family but the literature tends to gloss over this point.

In the end, I had conducted the interviews and then read through my notes from start to finish twice. I had written the interview notes and I had written the summary sheets so the information was recorded by the same person at different points in time and in different formats which helps solidify the information. I also went back to the interviews when I wasn't certain about details or I remembered a comment but I couldn't remember who

said it. I constantly moved back and forth between the summary sheets and the actual interviews in such a way that these women never became disjointed pieces of information to me. In fact, I would think 'I am sure Dayle told me this or if it wasn't her it was Donna'. The pseudonyms I used for these women became my means of identifying them and even though the results focus on particular aspects of all the women's lives, they themselves remain separate, individual people for me.

B. Data Analysis

The data could not be coded in a useful and meaningful way without a careful examination of the research questions. In other words, I had to consider: one, what exactly was being asked?; and two, what would constitute a reliable and comprehensive answer to the question? In the most general sense, my goal was to study what was happening in farm wives' work lives and develop plausible explanations for why similarities and differences emerged in their working lives. More specifically, I was interested in studying the impact a farm's commodity production had on farm wives' work and how farm wives' work changed over their lifetime as a consequence of changes in their families, farm and community.

It was the work of C. Wright Mills (1959) which provided the framework for analysis. He argued all sociological research should be concerned with three kinds of questions, namely:

1. How is this society organised and what are the consequences of organising it in this way?
2. What is the history of this society and the way it is organised? How does the historical period affect the direction and events occurring within society?; and
3. What kind of 'social structures' is this society producing? What kind of people are coming to prevail as a consequence of these social structures?

In my research his questions became:

1. How is 'family' farming organised and what are the consequences for farm wives' work of organising it in this way?;
2. How has the historical period within which these farm wives are located affected their family farms and work?; and
3. What does the future look like for farm wives in New Brunswick? What kind of work situations are farm wives facing on family owned and operated dairy and potato farms?

In effect, C. Wright Mills' questions lead one to ask 'how are things organised' and 'what are the consequences of organising it this way'? In the case of farm wives' work, the analysis then needs to encompass 'family' issues and 'farm' issues to borrow Nettie Wiebe's (1995) phrase since it is around these two dimensions that family farming is organised. Wiebe helps define what these terms mean as does the farm women's literature. At this stage, what needed to be looked at, sought out and analysed was dictated by first, the literature on wives and secondly, the literature on farming. In other words, the analysis — i.e. the categories and questions — was driven by the theoretical arguments in the literature. It was a deductive process guided by Mills' questions. Nevertheless, there was also an inductive process as the interviews themselves presented issues which the literature on farm women had not adequately addressed.

What is interesting is that the analysis relied on a constant backwards and forwards process between deduction and induction. At some moments, analysis was guided by the work of others — in sometimes disparate areas — for example, Julius Roth's (1963) work detailing how time was structured in hospitals for doctors and patients coupled with my participation in the potato harvest brought the issue of farming rhythms and work schedules to bear on the final analysis of how husbands' farming work structures their wives' lives. At other moments, conclusions were more intuitive or inductive in nature so that as I read the interviews it became apparent that there were multiple ways for 'getting the job done' and how their farming job was done stood in sharp contrast from 'the job to be done'— a point which has been completely neglected by the literature on farm women.

In summary, the research questions and analytic categories were theory driven. Answering the questions and making sense of the categories required an examination of a broad range of literature because the literature on farm women's work has failed to consider what it is to be a wife and it hasn't taken farming as an occupation seriously enough. Janet Finch's (1983) questions played an important role in the analysis in that they highlighted the need to examine 'how husbands' work structures their wives' lives' rather than simply 'how farm wives contribute to their husbands' work' — the strategy most often pursued in the literature. Reading Delphy and Leonard's (1992) book after completing the interviews significantly influenced the final analysis since their work reinforced the importance of Janet Finch's work and the significance of the information embedded in the interviews. All of these events became interwoven and produced the thesis herein.

C. Intercalibration: Who or what does my sample represent?

Throughout my analysis, I was concerned with the issue of who my case study represented or how reflective this sample, obtained through a snowball technique, was of the target group within the New Brunswick farm

community. The analytic framework of the case study provided the 'spatial and temporal boundaries' for selecting the individual cases to compare (Ragin, 1994: 113). So it was my research design and questions which required me to find farm wives engaged in potato and dairy farming. There needed to be a match between the women I interviewed and the categories I intended to compare. But how reflective is my sample of farm wives on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick to the actual farm community?

This is important to know since one of the issues which surround purposive sampling is how representative and generalisable the research findings actually are. Both representativeness and generalisability are concerned with the degree to which the instances studied exemplify the entire population. In other words, how much can be inferred to the wider society given the small number of instances actually examined in a case study investigation? One response to this question has been to make a distinction between statistical representativeness and sociological appropriateness (Hamel, 1993; Rose, 1991; Sayer *et. al.*, 1985; Stoecker, 1991; Yin, 1994). Those who promote this distinction begin with a critique of quantitative methods. They contend that while quantitative research practices provide descriptive 'representativeness' (by informing us of the common properties and general patterns of the whole population) they do not provide any causal relations between the correlation and coincidences of variables they identify. Sayer *et al.* illustrate this argument when they write that quantitative methods lack:

> explanatory penetration not so much because it is a 'broad-brush' method and insufficiently detailed, but because the relations it discovers are formal ones of similarity, dissimilarity, correlation etc., rather than substantial, causal relations of connection (Sayer *et. al.* 1985: 152-153).

In contrast, the case study allows us to move beyond "statistical association" and examine in the concrete situation "the historical causal process" at work (Stoecker, 1991: 93). In terms of generalisability there has been a similar argument: "generalisability applies more accurately to similar situations and depends on the use of longitudinal information, a comparison of competing explanations, and precise description" (Stoecker, 1991: 92).

Using Statistics Canada data, it is possible to compare my sample to the New Brunswick situation. This technique of 'intercalibration' enables the reader to see how reflective my picture is of the larger picture, even though 'my sample was not randomly drawn'. I would like to reiterate that I was not seeking a statistically representative sample of the farm population since such an approach would not have enabled me to answer my research questions. But it is useful to see 'who' is reflected in my interview data.

My sample can be examined in relation to three Statistics Canada variables. First, how reflective my sample is of the number of farms in each commodity sector. Second, how my sample compares with the number of farms in each size class in the particular commodity sector; and thirdly, how my sample compares to the percentage of production within each size class. I will also look at gross farm receipts to consider how 'economically viable' these farms are or how likely they are to be making their livelihood from farming. Unfortunately my own sample is not directly comparable to this last variable since only a few farms were willing to disclose gross farm receipts. In these tables I am using 1991 data because it was the census in effect at the time of the interviews. The 1996 census data is still being tabulated and published by Statistics Canada, therefore, not all the 'variables' I consider here are yet available for this latest census.

i. Farms producing the commodity

In 1991, there were 442 potato farms in New Brunswick and I interviewed 12 women whose main commodity was potatoes. However both Barbara and Betty's farms should be included here because even though they were producing both dairy and potatoes they indicated over half of their revenues came from potato farming so they would be classified as potato farms in Statistics Canada data. So my sample of 14 represents 3.2% of the total potato farms in the province in 1991.

Even though I interviewed 16 women from dairy farm operations, I have excluded the two farm wives which are no longer farming. As neither of these women were farming in 1991 they would not have been reflected in the Statistics Canada data. Denise had 12 dairy cows and sold cream until she retired from dairy farming in 1975; however she and her husband continued to raise cattle until 1987. Dixie's farm milked 25-30 cows for fluid milk until they sold the farm in 1985 to pursue another vocation. According to Statistics Canada, there were 637 dairy farms in New Brunswick in 1991 and my sample of 14 represents 2.2% of the total dairy farms in the province. However, for the same year, the Canadian Dairy Commission claims there were only 526 farms in New Brunswick "with shipments of milk or cream", this makes the sample 2.7% of dairy farms shipping milk and cream in the province in 1991. I actually conducted the interviews during November 1995 and September 1996, for the year ending July 31st, 1996 the Canadian Dairy Commission indicates there were only 395 farms shipping milk or cream which means my sample of 14, represents 3.5% of the dairy farms which were actively shipping milk and cream that year.

ii. Farms by size class

Examining the number of farms in each class size provides another picture of the data. I would be inclined to argue the farms in the smallest class size 1-17 acres for potato farms and 1-17 animals milked for dairy farms represent the hobby or subsistence farms which are not part of this study. This is born out further when we look at the other two dimensions — the distribution of the province's total potato acreage and dairy herds within each class size and the number of farms according to gross farm receipts. First let us turn our attention to the number of farms in each class size.

A first inspection of Tables D.1 and D.2 would indicate the larger farms are over-represented in my sample and the smaller farms under-represented. However, the 124 potato farms growing between 1-17 acres only grew 579 acres of potatoes between them in 1991; for an average of 4.67 acres each. So even though at least 51 per cent of their gross receipts came from potato production, it is hard to imagine farms in this size class are economically viable enough to make their living from farming. While it is no longer possible to establish the exact size of the farms in the 1-17 acre category, it is revealing to look at the 1981 figures when this amalgamated group was still catalogued according to eight smaller class sizes. In 1981 there were 280 farms in this category (compared to the 124 in 1991) and they can be broken down as follows: there were 118 farms growing one acre of potatoes; 30 farms growing two acres of potatoes; 41 farms growing three to four acres of potatoes; 33 farms grew five to six acres of potatoes; 18 farms grew seven to eight acres of potatoes; 17 grew nine to ten acres; 12 grew eleven to twelve while only 11 grew thirteen to seventeen. In other words, half of the farms in 1981 which would now be classified as falling in the 1-17 acre class size, actually grew no more than 2 acres of potatoes! If this continues to be the case, this size class is indicative of the hobby and subsistence farmers who are not part of this study. If these farms are excluded, the same sample represents 4.4% of farms trying to make their living from potato farming.

Table D.1: Potato Farms by size class

Size Class in Acres	N.B. 1991*	% P. Farms	My Sample	% My Sample
1-17	124	28.1	0	0
18-47	42	9.5	2	14.3
48-127	112	25.3	2	14.3
128-277	125	28.3	5	35.7
278+	39	8.8	5	35.7
Total	442	100	14	100

*From Statistics Canada, Catalogue #95-323, 1992: Table 22, p. 13.

Table D.2: Dairy Farms by size class

Size Class by # Cows	N.B. 1991*	% D. Farms	My Sample	% My Sample
1-17	183	28.73	0	0
18-47	269	42.23	7	50
48-77	141	22.14	4	28.57
78-122	35	5.49	3	21.43
123+	9	1.41	0	0
Total 637	100	14	100	

*From Statistics Canada, Catalogue #95-323, 1992: Table 23, p. 14.

Similarly there were 183 dairy farms in size class 1-17 with an average of 4.94 cows each. Once again, it is hard to imagine a farm being economically viable enough for a family to make a living if 51 percent or more of their farm sales are coming from fewer than 17 cows. This is also the size class which has experienced the greatest exodus from dairy farming — shrinking from 4,858 in 1971 to 1,116 in 1976 to 700 in 1981, to 358 in 1986 and finally to 183 farms in 1991 (Statistics Canada, Catalogue #95-324, Table 23, p. 14 and 1971 Census of Agriculture, Table 10). Again, it is revealing to look at the 1981 figures when this amalgamated group was still catalogued according to four smaller class sizes. In 1981 there were 700 farms in this category (compared to the 183 in 1991) and they can be broken down as follows: there were 277 farms milking one to two cows; 218

farms milking three to seven cows; 126 farms milking eight to twelve cows; and 79 farms milking thirteen to seventeen cows. If the farms in the 1-17 size category are excluded the same sample represents 3.08% of farms trying to make their living from dairy farming.

It is also revealing to look at the way potato farming is distributed throughout the province. Three counties in the north-west are considered the 'potato belt': Carleton County, Madawaska Country and Victoria County. It is within these three counties that 321 of the provinces 442 potato farms are located — and in 1991 these 321 farms grew 47,938 of the province's 50,621 acres of potatoes, i.e. 94.7%. In effect, the 121 remaining potato farms are scattered throughout the province's remaining 12 counties growing 2,683 acres or 5.3% of the province's total acreage in 1991. Since all of my interviews were conducted in the 'potato belt', my sample represents 4.36% of the farms in the region considered to make its living from potato farming.

Table D.3: Potato Farms in New Brunswick's 'Potato belt'

1996 # Farms	Av. Acreage	1991 # farms	Av. Acreage	
Carleton Country	148	179.2	163	140.8
Madawaska County	41	172.7	49	181.7
Victoria County	102	169.3	109	147.5
Total	291		321	

Table constructed from Statistics Canada, Catalogue #95-174-XPB, 1997: 27 and Statistics Canada, Catalogue #95-323, 1992: 11.

Interestingly, in the five year period between the 1991 and 1996 census, the 'potato belt' had 30 farms exit from potato farming, while the province overall only had three fewer potato farms. As a result the number of potato farms increased in seven other counties with the biggest increase occurring in Kings (which includes St. John) county. Even though, only 37% of the province's farms grow 128 or more acres of potatoes, the average farm size in the region is well above the 128+ acres. In this light it is perhaps not surprising that interviewees steered me towards the 'larger', i.e. 'serious' potato farms.

The two farms growing potatoes in the 18-47 acres range are seed potato operations. A demanding crop with a higher return than processing or table potatoes. These two farms are also among the four farms supporting only one nuclear family. The remaining ten farms are supporting two or more families. Phoebe whose farm is in the 128-277 size class indicated that her nuclear family's share of the potato crop would be around 90 acres indicating farm sizes would likely be smaller if farms were not inter- and intra- generational, supporting two or more families in farming.

Sussex, located in central New Brunswick is considered the 'dairy capital' of the province. However, this is probably more reflective of bygone days when there was a substantial number of dairies and small cheese factories in the area. But this does not bear itself out today when looking at the distribution of dairy farms across the province. While there is a slightly larger percentage of dairy farms in this part of the province, dairy farming is quite evenly distributed throughout New Brunswick.

iii. Production capacity by size class

The case is made stronger that the smallest size class is not making its living from farming when one examines the production capacity within each size class. My own sample very much reflects these 'production capacity' percentages and is more representative of the production capacity within each size class than the actual number of farms within them.

The smallest class size accounts for 28.1 per cent of the potato farms in New Brunswick but less than two percent of the province's potato acreage. Because of the small amount of production these farms represent, they are not making major contributions to the province's 'farm gate receipts' or export markets. The 'small', 18-127 acre, potato farms, account for 34.8% of the province's potato farms and 21.7 percent of the province's potato acreage. This grouping is 28.6% of my sample. The 'medium' sized farms, 128-277 acres, account for almost fifty percent of the province's potato acreage and slightly more than one-quarter of the farms. These farms account for 35.7% of my sample. The 'large' potato farms with more than 277 acres account for less than ten percent of the farms but almost one-third (30.5%) of the province's acreage. Thirty-six percent of my sample falls within this 'large' farm category. My sample is more reflective of the province's production capacity levels within each class size than the actual number of farms within each size class. This is significant since I asked

women to suggest women for me to interview, within the two commodity sectors, who they felt had different or contrasting work experiences to their own. Based on their initial descriptions, my sample has come to be more reflective of the 'scales of production' rather than actual farm size. This pattern holds true with the dairy farms as well.

Table D.4: Production Capacity Distribution of N.B. Potato Farms, 1991

% P. Farms (Acreage)	% Production	My sample	
1-17	28.1	1.1	0
18-47	9.5	2.5	14.3
48-127	25.3	19.2	14.3
128-277	28.3	46.6	35.7
278-362	5.2	14.2	21.4
363-572	2.7	10.5	14.3
573 & over	0.9	5.8	0
% Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
#Farms/Acreage	442	50,621	14

Statistics Canada, Catalogue #93-348,1992: Table 34, p. 296-297.

Table D.5: Production Capacity Distribution of N.B. Dairy Farms, 1991

% farms	% Animals	My sample	
1-17	28.7	3.9	0
18-47	42.2	39.3	50.0
48-77	22.1	35.7	28.6
78-122	5.5	14.7	21.4
123-177	1.4	6.4	0
%Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
#Farms	637	23,330	14

Statistics Canada, Catalogue #93-348, 1992: Table 41, p. 322-323.

In 1991, dairy farms with 1-17 cows represented 28.7% of all dairy farms but they only accounted for 3.9% of all the cows milked in the province. Whereas in 1971, this same class size represented 76.4% of all farms and accounted for 37.7% of all animals. It is the 48-77 which has seen the biggest growth, they've increased their distribution from 3% to 22.1% of all dairy farms, with a jump from 13.1% of all cows to 35.7%.

In terms of the number of farms in each class size my sample appears skewed towards the larger sized farms (78 animals +). But if the same sample is looked at in terms of production capacity, i.e. the way the province's milking cows are distributed across class size, my sample is extremely representative: 78.9 percent of production capacity is on farms with 77 or fewer cows and my sample has 78.6 falling into this category. Conversely, 21.1 percent of production capacity is on the 6.9 percent of farms with 78 or more cows and 21.4 percent of my sample falls within this category. In fact, in terms of production capacity my sample over-represents the 'smaller' 18-47 size class farms (by 10.7%) and under-represents the 'medium' sized 48-77 size class farms (by 7.1%) and again over represents the 'larger' 78-122 size class farms (by 6.7%) while not representing the largest 123+ farm class size.

iv. Farms according to Gross Farm Receipts

While my sample of 14 in each category only represents 3.2% of the total potato farms or 2.2 % of the total dairy farms in the province, these same samples jump to 4.4% for potato farms and 3.1% for dairy farms when the farms from the smallest size class are eliminated on the basis that they are not making their living from farming. This position is strengthened when one examines potato and dairy farms in relation to gross farm receipts. Gross farm receipts refer to the gross income the farm takes in — i.e. the monies which pass through the farm accounts. Farm families may have other sources of income — off-farm employment, investments, non-farm businesses — which would not be considered part of the farm business activities unless they were making direct financial contributions to the farm from this income. In other words, gross farm receipts refer to the gross income farms report from all sources — sales, investment, subsidies, interest — which were farm related. Gross farm receipts also include 'income-in-kind', that is farm commodities which the farm would normally sell but which were instead used for family consumption. For example, beef farms which butchered beef for the family freezer instead of selling it would have this production counted as 'income-in-kind' rather than farm sales but it would still be included in 'gross farm receipts' (Statistics Canada, Catalogue #21-603E, 1993: 25). For a further discussion of this practice and the arbitrary nature of what is and isn't counted in government tabulations see Delphy and Leonard (1992: 90-91). It is important to realise this table is referring to gross farm income[1] — not to profits earned. In other words it does not consider farm expenditures which must still be subtracted and can arguably be higher for larger operations, especially if they have labour costs, resulting in small differences in profit margins between medium and large scale operations.

Table D.6: Potato Farms according to Gross Farm Receipts

# Potato farms	Acreage	Av. Acreage	% p. farms	
Under $2500	19	170	8.9	4.3
2500-4999	15	145	9.6	3.4
5000-9999	28	150	5.4	6.3
10,000-24,999	27	602	22	6.1
25,000-49,999	42	1,159	28	9.5
50,000-99,999	55	3,225	59	12.4
100,000-249,999	134	15,409	115	30.3
250,000-499,999	85	17,287	203	19.2
500,000 and over	37	12,474	337	8.4
Total	442	50,621	114.5	100

Tabulated from Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-324, 1992: Table 28, pp. 38&39.

What is interesting in Table D.6 is that 89% of the province's total acreage (i.e. 45,170 acres) is grown by the 57.9% of family farms (256 farms) with gross farm receipts of $100,000 or more. The remaining 11% of all potato crops in 1991 (5,451 acres) were grown by the 42.1% (186) family farms with $99,999 or less in gross farm receipts. The 89 farms with $24,999 or less in gross farm receipts only accounted for 1,067 acres of production or a mere 2% of production (their average farm size would be 12 acres) — even though they account for 20% of all potato farms. Given that farm expenditures would still need to be deducted from these sales, it is

[1] In calculating total gross farm receipts, the Census Questionnaire instructs farms: to not include net income; to include: receipts from all agricultural products sold, marketing board payments received, program and rebate payments received, GST refunds received, dividends received from co-operatives, receipts from the sales of maple syrup products and Christmas trees, custom work and all farm receipts; and to not include: receipts from the sale of capital items (e.g. quota, land, buildings, machinery) or receipt of any goods bought only for retail sales. Sales from forest products (e.g. firewood, pulpwood, logs, fence posts, pilings, standing timber etc.) are to be reported in another section rather than as part of gross farm income. It obviously does not include income from off-farm employment.

hard to imagine this group of farms is principally reliant on farm income.[2] The 62 potato farms (14%) with gross farm receipts of less than $10,000 are most certainly reliant on other financial resources unless they are living in abject poverty. Even Statistics Canada excludes most farms with less than $10,000 in gross farm receipts from their analytic discussions:

> For purposes of statistical tabulations, unincorporated farms showing a gross operating revenue of $10,000 or less are excluded (Statistics Canada, Catalogue #21-522E, 1993: 7).

Table D.7: Dairy Farms by Gross Farm Receipts

#Dairy farms	#Cows†	Av. # cows	% D. farms	
Under $2500*	125	N.A	N.A	19.6
2500-4999	19	N.A	N.A	3.0
5000-9999	17	N.A	N.A	2.6
10,000-24,999	34	N.A	N.A	5.3
25,000-49,999	34	N.A	N.A	5.3
50,000-99,999	103	N.A	N.A	16.4
100,000-249,999	234	N.A	N.A	36.7
250,000-499,999	60	N.A	N.A	9.4
500,000 and over	11	N.A	N.A	1.7
Total	637	23,330	37	100

Table produced from Statistics Canada, Catalogue 95-324, 1992: Table 31, p. 68.

*Since tables indicate the number of farms making over $2500 in gross farm receipts we can presume the remainder are making less than $2500, which is how I established there are 125 farms in this category.

†It is not possible to establish the number of cows each of these categories account for in the province because dairy cattle are amalgamated with all cattle and calves in the province making it impossible to discern the average size of dairy farms according to gross farm receipts.

A similar pattern emerges when dairy farms are examined in relation to gross farm receipts (Table D.7). Here the number of farms with less than $10,000 in gross farm receipts is even more staggering since twenty percent of dairy farms have less than $2500 in gross farm receipts. In dairy farming, farms with $100,000 or more in gross farm receipts represent 47.9% of dairy farms compared to the 57.9% of potato farms represented by the same category. This trend continues with a slightly narrower gap when one realises 64% of all dairy farms have $50,000 or more in farm receipts while 70% of potato farms have $50,000 or more in farm receipts. But clearly, the farms making less than $10,000 in gross sales fall way below the poverty line and it is hard to imagine such family farms are solely dependent on farming — they are more likely to be the hobby, subsistence or part-time farmers.

In fact, those farms making less than $2500 are excluded from Statistics Canada's discussion of farms according to gross farm receipts. Therefore, at the very least it is possible to exclude the 125 dairy farms which Statistics Canada excludes in its presentation of selected agricultural data (Statistics Canada, Catalogue #95-324, 1992: Table 29.1, p. 98). These farms are undoubtedly hobby farms or subsistence farms and therefore not part of the study. In 1991, there were 512 dairy farms with more than $2500 in gross farm receipts, by 1996 this figure dropped to 399 — evidence that even the more economically prosperous farms are succumbing to economic pressures and agricultural restructuring.

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[2] If they are principally reliant on farm income they would be living in "straitened circumstances" especially since farm expenses would also have to be deducted from these incomes. In 1991, 13.1 percent of Canadian families did live in abject poverty (Duffy and Mandel, 1994: 61). For a more extensive discussion of families living below the poverty line in Canada see Duffy and Mandel, 1994.

The average gross farm receipts per farm in New Brunswick was $94,906 in 1991, and $100,602 in 1996 (Statistics Canada web site, 1996 Census of Agriculture, New Brunswick Highlights). This average is deduced from dividing all census farms in the province with the total gross farm receipts recorded in the province. Consequently if the 'smaller' operations, making less than $2500 were excluded, the average gross farm receipts for the 'medium' and 'larger' sized farms would be higher. Since the average farm has over $90,000 in gross farm receipts, the farms with less than $2500 are clearly lagging far behind economically.

It is useful to know which 'farm operations' are reflected in my data. The above tables and discussions are intended for the reader to establish how 'representative' my sample of dairy and potato farms are of the New Brunswick farm community. While a purposive selection process does not permit me to draw inferences to all farm women nor to the farm community as a whole, it does allow me 'to answer' my research questions by comparing and contrasting the work histories of farm wives on dairy and potato farms in New Brunswick.

APPENDIX E:
PROFILES OF RESPONDENTS

This section provides a brief profile of the thirty women who are referred to throughout the thesis. As the text of the case study focuses on particular dimensions of the interviews, a profile of each farm wife may not easily emerge. Consequently I have created a 'thumb-nail sketch' of each respondent in order to highlight their background, family and farm characteristics. It is hoped these sketches will provide a glimpse of the individual women who have formed the basis of my case study analysis.

I have organised these profiles in alphabetical order according to commodity groupings. Sixteen women from dairy farms, twelve women from potato farms and two women from farms which produced both commodities were interviewed. Anonymity was guaranteed and in many cases a prerequisite for carrying out the interview. Given the small size of the farm community under study, some characteristics have been modified to ensure women's confidentiality but not in ways which would alter the final analysis. To enable the reader to easily establish what commodity group each woman belongs to I have given the women pseudonyms reflecting their commodity group: all the women whose names begin with the letter D are connected to dairy farms, those beginning with the letter P are connected to potato farms and Betty and Barbara are engaged in both commodities.

Barbara is 48 and has been married twenty-six years. She is the mother of three children, a son and daughter in their mid-twenties and a daughter in her late teens. Their son works with them on the farm. Before marrying Barbara completed a university degree in teaching. She did not grow up on a farm.

Barbara's husband used to farm with his father and brother but eight years ago they began farming on their own and then their son joined them. They incorporated the farm about five years ago in order to begin transferring ownership to him. When they started dairy farming they milked 15 cows using a pipeline milking system now they milk 65 cows a day in a milk parlour. In the past year they bought quota to increase their production. They grow their own grain and mix their own feed. They feed the cows silage, participate in the provincial DHAS program and pay the local representative to artificially inseminate the cows. In terms of the potato crop, they have expanded from 100 to 410 acres. They are currently growing for the processing and seed markets. They use a four row windrow and air vac harvester to harvest the crop which is equivalent to having two harvesters on the field. They have five potato houses with computerised ventilation systems.

Betty is 56 and has been married thirty-six years. She has five adult children. A son and daughter continue to work on the farm with them. Betty never completed high school but she did grow up on a farm and she and her husband jointly decided to farm together.

Betty's farm is milking 22-25 cows from May until October using an automated milk pail system. They are separating the milk and shipping cream. The cows are all calving in the winter within a month of each other. They are growing some of their own grain. The cows are fed hay and feed but not silage. In terms of potatoes, they are growing 55 acres of seed potatoes a year. Since the mid-1970s they have been using a conventional harvester to harvest the crop. In the mid-1980s they expanded the potato house and continue to use a fan system to circulate the air. Betty also had 500 laying hens and sold eggs to 135 households.

Daisy is 36 and has been married thirteen years. She has two children — one in elementary school and one pre-schooler. She completed a secretarial course at community college and continued to work off the farm until she had children. Daisy never grew up on a farm and her husband was already farming when she married him. Their farm is a century farm which has been farmed by her husband's family for seven generations.

Her husband and father-in-law had a chicken operation. Daisy and her husband decided to go into dairy farming together. They started off milking about 20 cows and now they are milking 42 daily. They began with a tie stall barn and pipe line milking system then four years ago they built a new free stall barn with a milk parlour. They have one full-time employee and one employee who works part-time on a year round basis. The cows are fed silage and hay. They call in the local representative to do the artificial insemination. Their farm participates in the ADLIC program. Since their father-in-

law retired six years ago they've taken over the chicken operation. They incorporated the farm the year after they got married.

Danielle is 35 and she has been married ten years. She has three children under the age of ten years of age. Danielle has a university degree in fine arts. She grew up in a large US city so farming was not part of her background but her husband was already farming with his father and brother when she married him.

Shortly after they were married her brother-in-law set up his own operation but her father-in-law continued to work with her husband. On the farm, they are milking 110 cows a day. They have two full-time employees and neither she nor her husband milk the cows or do barn work. They stopped computer feeding the cows about two years ago which cut costs and increased milk production. The cows are fed silage and hay. They artificially inseminate the cows themselves. They grow their own grain and sell grain to local farmers.

Daphne is 42 and has been married for twenty-two years. She has three daughters. One in middle school, one in high school and one in university. Daphne completed a secretarial course at community college and has taken on part-time work over the years. She did not grow up on a farm and when she met her husband he was working as a carpenter and only helping his father with the farm.

They started off with a dairy and hog farm but early on switched from hogs to beef. In the early days, they shipped cream and then in the mid-1980s they started shipping milk. They milk 35 cows a day. They have a tie stall barn with a pipe line milking system. Daphne can't reach the pipe line because she isn't tall enough so she only milks by herself if it's an emergency. The cows are fed hay but not silage and they are not computer fed. They artificially inseminate the cows themselves. Her husband and father-in-law have a formal partnership agreement. They have one full-time employee.

Dawn is 54 and married thirty-seven years ago. She has four children all in their thirties. One son farms with them, their other son and two daughters do not. Dawn completed high school and married immediately afterwards. During the early years of their marriage, her husband worked in a sawmill but he wanted to farm. Together they decided to farm. Dawn did feel apprehensive about this decision because she never grew up on a farm but she 'went along with it.'

They have a mixed farm: milking cows, raising beef and growing apples. In the beginning they also sold eggs. They started off selling cream and then in the late 1970s they switched to milk. They milk 40 cows a day. They have a tie stall barn with a pipe line milking system. The cows are fed hay but not silage and they are not computer fed. The local representative is called in to artificially inseminate the cows. In addition to their son, they have one other full-time employee.

Dayle is 54 and has been married thirty-two years. Dayle completed a university degree in nursing. She has two children, a son and daughter in their late twenties. Their son works with them on the farm and their daughter married a farmer. Dayle grew up on a farm in Holland. She and her husband jointly decided to immigrate to Canada and buy a farm because they could not expand their operations in Holland.

They are milking 60 cows a day on their farm. Ten years ago they built a new barn shifting from a tie stall and pipe line system to a free stall and milk parlour. This change also enabled them to begin computer feeding the cows. The cows are fed silage and hay but they use bunker silos which are much cheaper than conventional silos. They do their own artificial insemination on the farm and participate in the ADLIC program. In addition to the dairy operation, they also have beef cattle. They have no employees. They incorporated the farm ten years ago.

Debbie is 39 and has been married seventeen years. She is the mother of two children in their early teens. Debbie grew up on a farm and completed a course at the agricultural college which focused on farm economics. She met her husband when she came to work on his parent's farm. At the time, the work was not what she expected because she ended up working more as a housekeeper than a farm helper.

Debbie's husband works with his two brothers and they each have a commodity they take primary responsibility for: hogs, beef and dairy. Her family is responsible for the beef operation, but Debbie

works in the dairy barn regularly and gets paid a salary for her work. They milk 70 cows a day. The cows are in a free stall barn and milked, 12 at a time, in a milk parlour. The cows are not computer fed but they do their own artificial insemination on the farm. They make both silage and hay. They have one full-time employee on the farm and hire summer crews to help with haying. The farm has been incorporated since the mid-1970s so all of the brothers receive a salary for the work they do from the farm corporation.

Debra is 37 and was married for eighteen years. Debra finished high school and worked in sales before marrying. She became a widow a few years ago when her husband died in a car accident. She has one daughter in her early teens and a daughter and son in their late teens. Her son completed high school the same year his father died and has been working on the farm out of necessity but Debra doesn't think her son was ready to take on the job and feels he resents having to be there. Debra never grew up on a farm and her husband was already farming with his parents when she met him.

She continues to work on the farm with her in-laws. Her in-laws live a few miles away while she and her children live next to the farm. Her husband had continued to earn a salary from the farm while his parents retained ownership. The farm has never been incorporated. They milk 110 cows a day. The cows are in a tie stall barn and milked, 24 cows at a time, in a milk parlour. The cows are computer fed. They make silage and hay. They do their own artificial insemination on the farm. They currently employee one full-time employee whereas they used to employee two people with their older milk parlour.

Deirdre is 39 and has been married thirteen years. She has five children ranging in age from pre-schoolers to middle school age. Deirdre grew up on a farm. She went to the agricultural college and specialised in plant science. When she married her husband he was already farming with his father. They had a formal partnership agreement.

Her father-in-law just retired this year. They have one part-time employee who works on a year round basis but he is getting older and with her father-in-law gone Deirdre thinks she may soon become more involved in farm operations even though she would rather set up her own green house operation. They are milking 30 cows a day using a pipe line milking system, they have a tie stall barn. The cows are not computer fed and they are not fed silage. They grow their own grain and hay. Their herd's production is monitored by ADLIC and they do their own artificial insemination on the farm. In addition to the cows they have a beef operation.

Delia is 37 and has been married for seventeen years. She is the mother of three children. One child is in elementary school and the other two children are in middle school. She is currently attending university pursuing a degree in forestry. Delia's husband was working on his uncle's dairy farm when she met him. She grew up in the city and began farming with romantic ideas about the countryside.

Once they married her husband set up his own operation. They are milking 37 cows a day using a pipe line milking system. Their tie stall barn has the cows tail to tail instead of head to head. The cows are not computer fed but they are fed silage. They have one silo and use bunk silage and round hay bales. Their herd's production is monitored by ADLIC but they call in local representatives to artificial inseminate the cows rather than do it themselves. They hire one person in the summer to help with field crops.

Denise is 75 and has been married forty-nine years. Denise never finished high school. She has four adult children, none of whom are farming. Denise and her husband both grew up on farms. Their farm is a century farm and was farmed by her husband's family for five generations.

It was a mixed farm combining subsistence production with commercial activities. They sold eggs, beef, milk and cream. The cream was shipped to dairies and the milk was sold to families locally. They started off hand milking three or cows then in the mid-1950s they increased the herd to twelve cows and milked using an automated milk pail system. The cows were all naturally bred and they would all calve during the winter. They would be put out to pasture in the spring. Haying crews would be hired in the early summer to put the square hay bales into the barn loft. Denise was responsible for sterilising the milk bottles, bottling the milk and delivering it to local customers. She also separated the milk and cleaned and sterilised the separator each day. And she cleaned the eggs and

sold them to local stores. Both she and her husband would do 'woods work' during the winter months, logging with a horse.

Diane is 36 and she has been married fifteen years. She has five children ranging in age from pre-school to middle school. Diane did not grow up on a farm but she was interested in agriculture. She met her husband at agricultural college. He was studying animal science and she was studying plant science. They bought the farm the year after they got married.

When they began farming fourteen years ago, they milked forty cows. Today they are milking 80 cows a day. They have expanded the barn over the years to accommodate the larger herd but they have always had a free stall barn with a milk parlour. The cows are fed silage and have been computer fed for the past ten years. The herd is monitored by the provincial ADLIC program. They do their own artificial insemination on the farm. They have one full-time employee and during the summer months, they hire two additional people full-time — one person to work on the farm and one person to work in the household cooking, cleaning and child minding since in addition to milking, Diane does field work and spraying during the summer months. They also raise seventy-five meat kings (chickens) for their own consumption and each fall they hire some one to kill and dress them. They have 24 laying hens so they always have fresh eggs.

Dixie is 35 and has been married for thirteen years. She has two children, one who is in elementary school and the other in middle school. She has a university degree in teaching. She did not grow up on a farm and she and her husband sold their dairy farm ten years ago.

Her husband had been farming on his own for about ten years when she met him. After marrying they farmed together for two and a half years before they decided to leave for her husband to pursue a new career. They had a tie stall barn and milked 25 to 30 cows a day using a pipe line system. The cows were not computer fed and they did not use silage. They produced square hay bales and relied on a hay crew in the summer to help them get the hay crop into the barn. Dixie would cook meals for the summer work crew. They also had an employee who came on an 'as needed' basis. He was an older man who lived in the community who would basically be 'on call' to help them during the year if they wanted to go away or extra work needed to be done. Dixie felt she had been the catalyst for her husband leaving the farm and pursuing a new career. In her opinion, "he would still be there or dead from hard work".

Dolly is 45 and married nineteen years ago. She is the mother of four children of middle school and high school age. She has a university degree in teaching. She and her husband both grew up on farms in Holland. Her husband had an office job and each weekend they would visit their parents on the farm. Together they decided to immigrate to Canada and buy a farm.

When they first arrived, they built a free stall barn. They are milking 40 cows a day in a milk parlour. The cows are fed silage from a bunk silage system. They are computer fed and their production is monitored by the ADLIC program. They call in a local representative to artificially inseminate the cows. In the summer, a neighbour is hired to help them with haying and silage. They also keep forty meat kings (chickens) and laying hens so they have eggs for their own consumption. Dolly kills and dress the chickens each fall.

Donna is 34 and has been married thirteen years. She has four sons ranging from pre-school to middle school age. Donna has a university degree in teaching and has done some supply teaching. Donna grew up on a hobby farm where they milked three cows and raised calves for meat. Her husband was farming with his father and brother when they married.

Shortly afterwards, he bought and set up his own dairy farm. They are milking 65 cows a day. They have a free stall barn and a milk parlour. They grow their own grain, corn and silage. Their cows are not computer fed. The cows performance is monitored every six weeks by the provincial DHAS program. They call in a local representative to artificially inseminate the cows. In the summer, they have a person working for them full-time and then the same person works for them part-time through the winter because they don't have the work or the funds to keep them full-time for the whole year. Donna is paid as an employee for her work on her farm.

Dorothy is 39, this is her second marriage and she has been married sixteen years. She has two sons in their early twenties and one daughter going into middle school. Dorothy has a university degree in business. She only recently gave up her full-time employment in a business office. Dorothy did not grow up on a farm.

Her husband was farming with his father when she met him. They farmed together until he retired about ten years ago. She and her husband have now formed a legal partnership between them on the farm. They are milking 40 cows. They have a tie stall barn and a pipe line milking system. She finds that she is too short to do the milking. They would like to increase their milk quota by 5 kilograms of butterfat a day — this would mean they could milk another five cows. Their cows are not computer fed but their production is monitored by the ADLIC program. They recently built a silo and feed the cows silage. They make round hay bales. They have no farm employees.

Dotty is 49 and married thirty-one years ago. Her four children are in their mid to late twenties. Her three daughters do not farm but her son is farming with them. Dotty finished high school before getting married. She grew up on a mixed farm which had Holstein cows, potatoes and grain. They shipped cream, "so there wasn't anything new" on her husband's farm.

When she married him, her husband was working with his father on the farm. Later her husband's father died in a farming accident and the farm was left to him. In the early 1980s, she and her husband established a legal partnership between them. They are milking 55 cows using a pipe line system in a tie stall barn. They do their own artificial insemination on the farm. The cows are computer fed and their production monitored by the ADLIC program. ADLIC is no longer government funded so they pay $200 for every trip they make to their farm. They grow their own grain on the farm and make round hay bales because it is 'hard to get help'. They also raise chickens and pigs for household consumption.

Paige is 46 and was married eighteen years ago. She has three teenagers. She has a nursing certificate and worked as a nurse for eight years before she got married. She grew up on a small mixed farm which produced mostly for the family's consumption while selling cream for an income. Her husband was already farming when she met him.

They grow between 35-50 acres of elite seed potatoes each year. Six years ago they bought a potato harvester and stopped hand picking the crop. They grow a green manure rotation crop so they plough it under at the end of the year. They have one full-time employee during the summer months and in the spring and fall they have an additional crew of six. In the spring the crew works to get the seed potatoes into neighbouring farmer's bulk trucks and they help with planting. In the fall, they work on the potato harvester.

Pamela is 50 in 1945 and has been married thirty-one years. They have three children, one son and two daughters, who are now in their twenties. Their son works with them on the farm. Pamela grew up on a mixed farm in the area and their farm includes the land which her father used to farm. She completed high school and has taken a computer course in recent years.

When they started farming, thirty-one years ago, they grew twelve acres of potatoes and now they grow 300 acres. They used to grow ninety-five per cent of their crop for McCains. Now they grow twenty per cent for McCains, twenty per cent is planted in seed potatoes and sixty per cent of their crop goes to the table stock market. They grow peas for McCains as a rotation crop, as well as grains and grasses for their cattle operation. Pamela is responsible for the beef operation on the farm while she, her husband and son share the potato operation. She and her husband also have a trucking business. They have one full-time secretary for the trucking business. One of their daughters works for them in the summer. And during the fall they can have as many as fifteen people on the pay roll. Their trucking business is incorporated but the farm is a 'joint-venture operation' which means that all income and expenses are split down the middle. Pamela, her husband and her son all take a living allowance from the farm.

Patricia is 51 and has been married twenty-nine years. She and her husband have two children, a son and daughter in their late twenties. Their son works with them on the farm. Patricia went to completed a course in agricultural economics at an agricultural college in the Netherlands. She grew up on a

farm. Her husband was farming when she met him but they couldn't expand their operation so twenty-five years ago they decided to immigrate to Canada.

They started farming in Canada 16 years ago with 140 acres of potatoes. Last year they grew 250 acres for the processing market. They have won several awards from McCains for the high quality of their produce. Patricia told me most years they rank amongst the top twenty delivering to McCains. They also grow 250 acres in grains as a rotation crop which they sell to local cattle farmers. They bought a harvester in the late 1980s and at that time stopped hand picking the crop. They hire seasonal workers in the spring and fall to assist with planting and harvesting the crop. Since the late 1980s the farm has been incorporated, so she, her husband and son take a salary from the farm.

Paula is 42 and has been married 21 years. Paula grew up on a potato farm and became a legal secretary after finishing high school. When Paula married her husband he was already farming with his parents. They have four children all in their teenage years.

The farm was given to them as a wedding present from her husband's mother. It was the farm homestead her mother-in-law had grown up on. She and her husband grow 25-30 acres of elite seed potatoes each year. In the early 1990s they bought a potato harvester because they were having trouble finding pickers. They now hire a crew of four to five people in the fall to work on the harvester. At odd times they might have some one helping with planting and racking the potatoes but generally they 'can't afford it'. They grow grains and hay as a rotation crop for their beef cattle. They share a lot of farm equipment with her brother-in-law which helps keep costs down. Her husband works off-the-farm during the winter months and they try to live off this salary so that they don't take any money out of the farm.

Pearl is 39 and has been married for seventeen years. Her husband was going to agricultural school and she was going to teacher's college when she met him. She knew she was marrying a farmer but she only partially knew what it meant because she was new to farming. They have three children in their early teens.

Initially her husband worked with his father and brother. But then their father retired and the two brothers could not agree on the direction the farm should take and her sister-in-law wasn't interested in farming, so she and her husband have bought their share. They grow for all three markets: table, processing and seed but the percentage for each market changes from year to year. They are currently growing 400 acres in potatoes and over a thousand acres in grains and silage which they use in their beef operation. They have always used a harvester to harvest the crop. They have expanded the potato house three times to accommodate their expanding acreage and they are producing a value-added product on the farm. Their 'value-added' potato product line employs sixteen people during the winter months and a new experimental product had an additional five people working at the time of the interview. The 'farm' has four full-time employees plus Pearl and her husband are paid a salary for their work on the farm. Pearl identified her husband as the farm manager and she worked as a full-time office person for the farm.

Peggy is 45 and married twenty-three years ago. She is the mother of three sons and one daughter. Her two oldest children are attending university while her two youngest children are in middle and high school. Peggy went to teacher's college and worked as a supply teacher when her children were young. But she found it difficult to respond to the 'on-call' nature of supply teaching so she took an accounting course and now works part-time in an office doing reception, secretarial and accounting work.

Her husband and his brother farm together but they have a 'gentleman's agreement' rather than a formal partnership agreement. This farm has decreased its production from 150-175 acres a few years ago to 100-125 acres of table potatoes which are hand picked. They have a green manure rotation crop which they plough under to add nutrients to the soil because they "couldn't do what they were doing forever as far as the land was concerned". To have a better rotation for the soil they "either had to expand or get smaller". Since Peggy and her husband aren't sure how current arrangements are going to fare once their children and nephews start entering the picture they didn't want to buy more land: "because the prices are too high and we are reluctant to make a big investment". During the first few years of their marriage they had a potato harvester to harvest the crop but it bruised the potatoes badly which meant they had to be sold quickly because they wouldn't keep. With hand picking, they can

store their potatoes until late in the season and sell them for a higher price. When they had the potato harvester they grew for the processing market now they grow table stock. They hire thirty people in the fall to hand pick the crop and they hire a crew of four to five in the spring to help rack and grade the potatoes for sale and to assist with planting.

Penny is 37 and has been married for fifteen years. She has four children all of elementary school age. She grew up in the middle of a city with 100,000 people so living on the farm has been quite an adjustment. She has a university degree in fine arts. She earns money by giving piano lessons to local school children.

Penny and her husband got married and started farming that same year. Her husband went into a partnership with his brother when their father decided to retire. Their partnership only lasted for four years. They incorporated the farm once they began operating on their own. When they started they were growing fifty acres of potatoes, today they are growing 300 acres. They are still growing eighty per cent of their crop for McCains but they are starting to move more into seed potatoes because "there's no money with McCains". They grow grains for a rotation crop which they sell and they used to grow peas for McCains as a rotation crop until a few years ago. The farm has two full-time employees, plus they hire three extra people to help with planting and seven to work on the potato harvester. In addition to the potato farm, her husband has a machinery business which is how come they are able to employ two people all year. Her husband also takes on seasonal jobs during the winter to make extra money.

Perdita is 33 and has been married for eight years. She finished high school and then worked in retail which she continues to do on a part-time basis. She is the mother of two pre-school age children. Her husband grew up on the farm they now live on but farming was not part of her background.

Her husband went to agricultural school and when he came back, he started farming with his father. Her husband received a salary for his work until they bought the farm from his father five years ago. They grow approximately two hundred and seventy-five acres of potatoes for the processing and table markets. They have always used an air vac harvester to harvest the crop. They have one full-time employee all year and one full-time summer employee, plus they hire a crew of six to work on the potato harvester in the fall. They grow peas for McCains and grains for sale as their rotation crops. They have recently built a new state of the art potato house with a computer ventilation system so they now have two potato houses.

Phoebe is 42 and has been married twenty years. She is the mother of a son and daughter in their early teens and a pre-schooler. Phoebe did a beautician course after completing high school. During the first ten years she worked in the evenings in town until her youngest son was born and now she has set up her own beauty salon in her house to save on travel and child care costs.

Phoebe grew up on a farm and it was her father who got her husband started in farming. In fact, they continue to share farm equipment and potato acreage with her father. They started off growing forty acres of potatoes. They started growing table stock potatoes but now they grow only forty per cent for this market and sixty per cent for the processing market. They bought a harvester about ten years ago so they could harvest the crop with 'fewer employees'. The farm employs one person full-time and six people for the harvest. In addition they have beef cattle and their rotation crops of grain and hay are fed to the cattle. They initially started off with pigs but the pork prices were so low they switched to beef. Her father is preparing to retire and her brother will be taking over from him, so there is some uncertainty about the future and how this arrangement will work out for her husband and their farm.

Phyllis is 56 and has been married thirty-three years. She and her husband have three children, two sons in their twenties and one daughter in her late teens. She went to teacher's college after finishing high school. Phyllis has taken a number of courses in the past ten years including computing, accounting and 'team management' courses.

Phyllis grew up on farm. She and her husband started farming with his father and now their two sons are working with them on the farm. The farm is not incorporated but they have a formal partnership agreement with their sons. They are growing 310 acres in potatoes, 400 acres in grain and they have 300 acres in hay and pasture. They bought their first harvester in the late 1960s. They currently have an air vac harvester and they hire six people to work on it in the fall. They mostly

grow for the processing market but they do sell some table stock on the open market. As well as the potatoes, they have a beef operation and a fertiliser and trucking business. They have one full-time employee for truck driving (in addition to her husband and sons who also drive). Phyllis worked off the farm until they set up this last business, since then she has worked at home as a part-time secretary on a full-time basis — she works for the business every morning from 9:00 until noon. They set up the trucking business because 'farms need to diversify and the income helps even out the ups and downs'.

Posy is 70 and has been married for fifty years. She and her husband had one son and four daughters. Her son worked with them until he unexpectedly died. Since none of their son-in-laws wanted to farm and they were approaching retirement age, they grew their last potato crop in 1991.

Posy was an only child and her father was getting older and he wanted to pass the farm on. So she and her husband took up farming even though Posy initially didn't want to farm. She had had to do farm chores before school, at night and in the summer since she was eight. So after high school she went to business college and worked as a secretary. It was her husband who wanted to farm.

They farmed for over forty years together and amalgamated ten farms with their original homestead — increasing the farm from 100 to 1100 acres. They started with thirty-five acres of seed potatoes and finished with 275 acres. They grew for both the processing and the seed potato market. The crop was hand picked until the late 1960s and then they bought a brand new conventional harvester which 'lasted for twenty years'. They finished harvesting with an air vac harvester. When they hand picked they had a crew of thirty with the air vac harvester they only needed six people in the fall. They started with one potato house and in the end they had four. The farm always had one hired man who worked all year to help with the animals. When they were first married they had a real mixed farm, potatoes were the commercial crop while a large variety of animals were kept for family consumption. At first they raised pigs and later cattle for commercial sale until the mid 1980s. Afterwards, they grew grain as a rotation crop and sold it. During the past five years they have started to sell the farm off, they've sold 600 acres and have 500 remaining to sell.

Priscilla is 53 and has been married for thirty years. She has two sons in their late twenties and neither are farming. She took a secretarial course at a community college and worked for a few years as a secretary before coming to the farm. She didn't grow up on farm but her family had a cow, 'everybody had a cow in those days'. Her husband was already farming when she met him.

Her husband worked with his father until five years ago but they started buying their own farm property twenty-five years ago. They've increased their property holdings from 150 to 1000 acres during that time. They currently grow 250 acres of potatoes and 150 acres of grain, and they have 50 new acres which they have just cleared from woodlot to put into potato production. The first year they were married they hand picked the crop but since the late 1960s they have had a harvester. They hire six people to work on the harvester in the fall. Until three years ago they grew for the processing market including peas as a rotation crop. Now they grow table stock and elite seed for their own use. They have set up their own 'value-added' potato product line which employs sixteen employees on a seasonal basis. They grow grains as a rotation crop which they sell to local farmers. The farm has been incorporated for six years.

They had cows and shipped cream until the mid-1970s. Then they had to make the decision to shift to milk production or to concentrate their efforts into potato operation. They opted to focus on potato production.

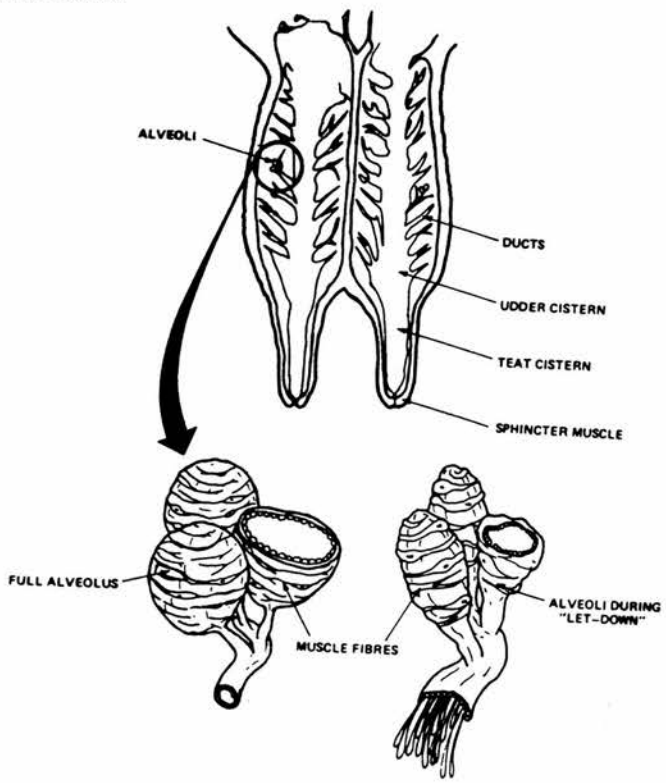
APPENDIX F:
MECHANICS OF MILKING A COW

This appendix is a section excerpted from **Canada, *Tie-Stall Dairy Cattle Housing*. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services Canada, Publication #1714, 1981: 24-26.** The excerpt describes the mechanics of milking a cow; and all figures are numbered as they appear in the original text.

Mechanics of Milking:
To understand the requirements of a milking system, it is essential to have a basic understanding of both the biology and the mechanics of milking.

Each quarter of the cow's udder contains millions of tiny sacs, called alveoli. These are surrounded with blood vessels providing blood for milk synthesis. The outside of each is also surrounded by tiny muscle fibers which contract upon stimulus, compressing the alveoli. Milk is produced in the alveoli continuously and is slowed down only by pressure buildup when the alveoli are full of milk. The alveoli are connected via a duct system to the udder cistern and to the teat itself, as illustrated in Figure 26.

Figure 26: The Udder



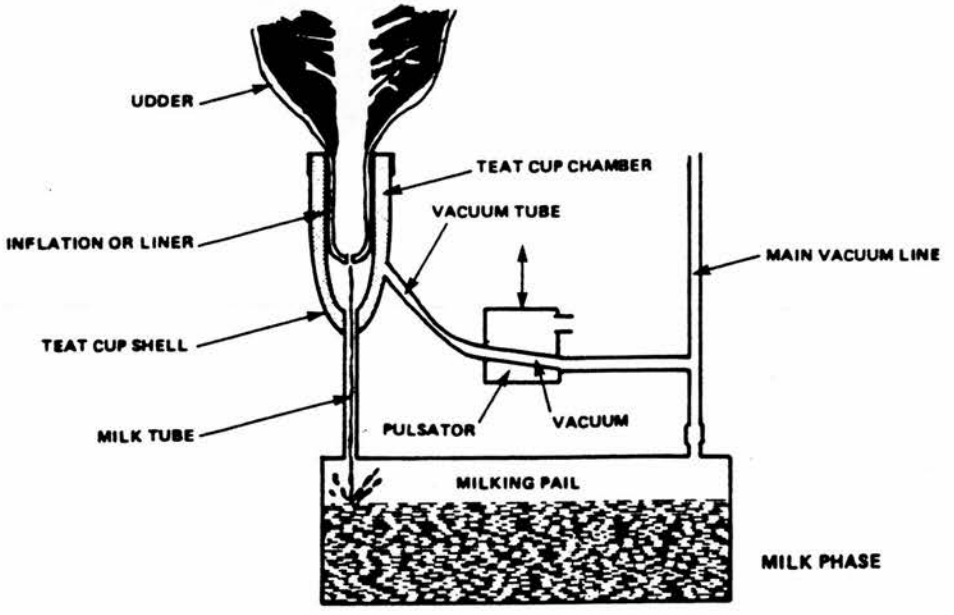
At milking time a stimulus, in the form of an udder massage or familiar sounds associated with milking, induces the release of a hormone, oxytocin, from the pituitary gland. Oxytocin is transported via the bloodstream to the udder where it activates the muscle fibers surrounding the alveoli. The fibers contract, forcing milk out of the alveoli into the duct system and udder cistern. This is known as "let down". The reaction occurs about 1 minute after stimulation and lasts for 6 to 8 minutes.

Another hormone, adrenaline, is released if the cow is frightened, hurt, or irritated and rapidly counteracts the effects of oxytocin, blocking the release of milk.

The action and counteraction of these two hormones emphasize the importance of careful and well-timed handling and milking of each cow.

Figure 27 illustrates the basic operation of the milking machine. A constant vacuum exists in milker pail. The vacuum is transmitted through milk tube to the teat end. A pulsator is situated between the vacuum line and the chamber created by the teat-cup shell and the inflation. The pulsator alternates the pressure in this teat-cup chamber between atmospheric pressure and the line vacuum.

Figure 27: Schematic of the principles of operation of milking machine



When there is atmospheric pressure between the inflation and shell, and vacuum inside the inflation, the inflation collapses around the teat as shown in Figure 27, providing the rest or massage phase of the milking cycle. This phase is essential to prevent tissue damage caused by body fluids congesting at the teat end if the teat is not relieved from the continuous milk vacuum. When the pulsator restores vacuum to the chamber between the inflation and shell, the inflation is then subjected to vacuum on both sides and returns to its normal open position. The pressure inside the inflation is less than the pressure inside the udder. This draws the sphincter muscle open and milk is expelled for the duration of the cycle. This process is repeated until all milk has been removed. Failure to remove the machine when this occurs will result in serious injury to the cow.

An organized milking routine will establish operator efficiency and good cow response at milking time. A suggested routine is:

1. Clean and massage udder with a single-service towel that has been immersed in hot udder-wash solution.
2. Remove three or four streams of milk into a strip cup and check milk for abnormalities.
3. As soon as teats fill with milk attach milker.
4. When milk flow stops or is reduced to a minimum, machine strip by running the hand down the sides of the quarter being stripped a few times. Remove the machine gently by breaking the vacuum at the mouth of the liner.
5. Dip teats in a teat-dip preparation.
6. Dip teat cup assembly in clean water followed by a sanitizer solution before you use it on another cow.

APPENDIX G:
SOCIO-PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FARM WIVES

Table G.1: Age of Interviewees

Age	Potatoes	Dairy	Both	Total
31-35	1	3	0	4
36-40	2	7	0	9
41-45	3	2	0	5
46-55	4	3	1	8
56-65	1	0	1	2
66-75	1	1	0	2
Total	12	16	2	30

Table G.2: Interviewees' Educational Backgrounds

Level of schooling	Potatoes	Dairy	Both	Total
Less than High School	0	1	1	2
High School	3	3	0	7
Community College*	6	3	0	8
Agricultural College	1	3	0	4
Some University	1	1	0	2
Undergraduate Degree	1	5	1	7
Postgraduate Degree	0	0	0	0
Total	12	16	2	30

*Under community college I have also included business and nursing schools since qualifications in these schools are now pursued at colleges. It should be noted that all independent nursing schools have been closed in the province and one must now obtain a nursing degree from the university to work as a nurse in the province.

Table G.3: Occupational Career Training

Occupation	Potatoes	Dairy	Both	Total
Teaching	3	3	1	7
Nursing	1	1	0	2
Secretarial	3	2	0	5
Business	0	1	0	1
Hairdressing	1	0	0	1
Fine Arts/ Music	1	1	0	2
Agriculture/ Forestry	1	4	0	5
No specialisation	2	3	0	5
N/A	0	1	1	2
Total	12	16	2	30

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